ACROSS / A16
Gov't losing P4B yearly from car smuggling

BUSINESS / B1
Delay in corporate income tax cut looms

WORLD / A22
Putin's man Medvedev wins Russia vote

LIFESTYLE / C1
Magazine editor wants to be first Filipina to run across US

Mike A trust rating sinks to negative 51

THE PUBLIC TRUST RATING OF JOSE Miguel "Mike" Arroyo has sunk to its lowest level since 2001, according to the latest survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS).

SWS found that 33 percent of the respondents had "much trust" in the President's husband and 84 percent had "little trust," giving him a net -51 (percent "much trust" minus percent "little trust"), the lowest net rating since January 2001.

The latest SWS survey was conducted

A16

Not all right, sirs? Ping slams Gringo

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.
A FORMER LEADER OF Senate majority bloc has described as "most unlikely" to understand the dangers of drawing the military

A17

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, March 4, 2008 | 44 | 8 sections | Vol. 23 | No. 88 | P18

16% of Metro folk willing to join rallies vs NBN deal

By Cyril L. Bonoan
Inquirer Research
Inquirer Mindanao
and Inquirer Northern Luzon

ORGANIZERS OF PROTEST actions calling for the resignation of officials involved in the National Broadband Network (NBN) controversy may count on 16 percent of Metro Manila adults to join demonstrations, results of the survey that Pulse Asia conducted last month showed.

That figure translates to about 650,000 individuals, according to Pulse Asia executive director Ana Maria Tabunda.

"However, these people do not say they will go to rallies at the same time," Tabunda said in a phone interview.

The biggest tally since the NBN scandal erupted last year took place in Makati on Feb. 28. Organizers of the rally that called for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation pegged the crowd at 75,000. Police said the demonstrators numbered 15,000.

Other power tallies were staged outside Metro Manila to denounce corruption in government.

(PHOTO) A4

WILLINGNESS TO JOIN PROTESTS

	Total	Class		
		ABC	D	E
● Will join	16	24	15	11
● Will support but not join	51	47	50	55
● Will not join, will not support	33	29	35	32

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO obliges two beauty queens in Calamba City in Laguna for a souvenir snapshot using a mobile phone camera. Ms Arroyo inaugurated a new bridge in Calamba on Monday.

9 GMA hecklers arrested

Rains abort unity walk of 77 mayors

By Christine O. Avendaño

A SUDDEN HEAVY DOWNPOUR aborted the "unity walk" of President Macapagal-Arroyo and 77 city mayors who hooted to Malacañang yesterday to pledge their support to her in the face of the latest corruption scandal that has engulfed calls for her to step down.

Instead, they settled for a photo opportunity in the Palace guesthouse, according to the President's deputy spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo.

The mayors, who belong to the LDP,

A4

Lozada says sorry anew for love affairs

By Margaux C. Orea
and Jerry E. Esplanada

AFTER SOCKING THE ARROYO administration with his exposés on alleged kickbacks in the controversial $329-million broadband Internet deal, ex-Bureau of Investigation chief Rodolfo Lozada Jr. yesterday sought public forgiveness for his marital indiscretions.

Appearing before hundreds of cit-

LOZADA A4

A4 YOUR FACE PROTEST Police and plainclothesmen arrest drug users without numbers who staged a lightning rally calling for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo who attended an activity for women at the Calamba City Hall in Laguna on Monday.

Activists roughed up, freed after 5 hours in jail

By Nitz Cuaresma Cutaja,
Inquirer Southern Luzon
and Christine O. Avendaño
in Manila

CALAMBA CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday got a taste of public anger at her scandal-wracked administration when nine activists jeered her, calling her a "fascist" and demanding her removal from office.

Dressed in an orange prisoner suit wearing dark glasses, the activists were about to release a paper balloon bearing the inscription "Gloria, step down" when police arrested them without charges.

It was the latest outburst of public indignation at Ms Arroyo following allegations linking her and her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, to supposed kick-

(VIDEO) A4

SC tackles executive privilege issue today

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT WILL HEAR today arguments on when and how executive privilege may be invoked, but legal angles already are saying information cannot be withheld to cover up a crime, unless it leads to self-incrimination.

Commission on Higher Education (Ched) Romulo Neri is opposed to appear before the tribunal to argue his petition to stop the Senate from questioning him again on the scrapped $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp.

The main issue to be tackled is the parameters of executive privilege, including when and how it can be invoked as well as the nature of the data requested, according to court spokesperson Jose Midas Marquez.

Marquez said the court would also likely discuss whether a person invoking executive privilege could be made to

SC TACKLES A6

Move to oust JDV as Lakas head put off

By TJ Burgonio and Ailene W. Lopez

LIVE TODAY, DIE ANOTHER DAY.

There's what happened to ousted Speaker Jose de Venecia during a closed-door meeting of Lakas-Kampi executives amid the chance of party stalwart to remove him as president of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD).

A month after the Pangasinan congressman was toppled as one of the longest-reigning Speakers in select time described in the "most protracted political assassination" in Philippine histo-

MOVE A6

"TRUTH CAMP" Students of St. Theresa's College in Quezon City demonstrate their stand during a signature campaign on Monday by the school's faculty, alumni and students against corruption in government.

CLINTON OR OBAMA?

Ohio, Texas races too close to call

WASHINGTON—HILLARY Clinton and rival Barack Obama are running neck-and-neck in Ohio and Texas on the eve of their crucial Democratic presidential showdowns, according to a Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll. Clinton's poll released on Monday.

Clinton, fighting to save her presidential bid after 11 straight wins by Obama, desperately needs victories in the big-state battlegrounds to keep her candidacy alive and face the Republican candidate in the November election.

The block counts from Illinois, a delegate-rich state on the western senator from New York, in Ohio and Texas, although his leads are within the poll's margin of error of just under 4 percentage points.

Obama leads 47 percent to 44 percent in Texas, as Clinton gained 3 percentage point overnight in the polling conducted by Zogby International.

OHIO A9

A3 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2008

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ2 FOUR DIGIT
12 26 | 4 1 2 9
SUERTRES
6 5 2 | 4 7 1
MEGALOTTO 6/45
4 9 20 22 31 33
P10,360,110.60

Esperon bats for regional Balikatan

Proposal would include other Southeast Asian nations in war games

Lozada fund over P2M

THE SENATE'S JOINT hearing slated for the high-low of Senator Jinggoy Estrada, Lozada is headed the P2-million mark after collecting P1 million in the last 10 days.

As of March 3, the AMLAC Secretary Fund's balance was P2,044,963.86," said Sen. Estrada. Committee secretary Atty. Rodolfo Cordova, executive secretary of the Commission of Higher Education Supervisor of the Philippines, as reported on the official web site of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

Cordova disclosed that a religious congregation — which refused to be identified — contributed P500,000 to the fund, helping it handle the P2-million mark.

On Feb. 22, the AMLAC fund was at P1,487,027.78.

Cordova said donations came mostly from concerned citizens who refused to be identified but said they only wanted to help the case witness in the NBN-ZTE controversy.

He said contributions may be sent to the AMLAC office at 28 Acacia St., Quezon City, or deposited to Metrobank Account No. 3255-07445-3, Beverly F. Archbold

By Tarra Quismundo
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—ARMED FORCES OF THE Philippines chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. has proposed expanding the Balikatan military exercises from a bilateral one between the Philippines and the United States to a multilateral or regional one involving the armed forces of all the Southeast Asian countries.

Esperon, also cochair of the Philippine-US mutual defense board, made the suggestion at Monday's closing ceremonies of this year's Balikatan, the annual large-scale war games and crisis-training activities conducted to keep the two countries' defenses at the ready against foreign aggression based on a Mutual Defense Treaty.

Esperon said the expansion of the war games would strengthen security alliances in the Asia-Pacific region to deal with multinational security issues as well as non-military threats such as disasters and diseases.

"It is better to call things together, and we not only talk of the security of the Philippines but the security of the region," he told reporters there.

Thailand is so far the only country in the region that now shares multilateral exercises, also called Cobra Gold, with its allies, he said.

"There are advantages to going multilateral. For example, the Philippines & Can as deployed but in our force common areas with other countries. So you may be able to cover some common fields.

Esperon said the suggestion came from him and from other particular observers, not from the US military.

Embassy representatives from Australia, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand joined this year's Balikatan as observers, Esperon said.

This year, Balikatan included civic and humanitarian work in the Luzon provinces, Leyte, Dinalupihan, Laoag and Siniloan.

The 16 Embassy, in a statement, said around 12,000 residents of the areas received medical care while another 1,000 received dental care. Schools and roads were built or repaired in more than 18 villages in the five areas.

The US spent $5.6 million on the humanitarian missions and military training during the last two weeks, said Brig. Gen. Arlo Ma. Ulit, marines commander.

He said the proposal to go multilateral would have to be tackled in the US government and the US Pacific Command.

The signing of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with other countries will pave the way for the multilateral exercises, Esperon said.

Last year, Manila signed a military agreement with Australia to train and hold exercises in the Philippines, an arrangement similar to the one with the US. With Reports

Folk adversely affected by mines ask SC for relief

By Leila B. Salaverria

DESPITE THE looming MONmy industry, residents of mineral-rich areas in Luzon and Mindanao claim they continue to remain poor and are in danger of living "worse than animals."

Foreign private companies may have profits yet they only give a pittance to the government, according to residents of Benguet province. In these districts, Zambales and Nueva Vizcaya.

Yesterday, the residents, along with party-list lawmakers and nongovernment groups, filed two petitions asking the Supreme Court to nullify the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and to stop the implementation of related measures of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Named respondents were the environment Secretary Lito Atienza and mining firms Australian Mountaineer Corp., Oil Philippines Inc., Hallmark Mining Corp., Australasian Lit Mining Corp., Sagittarius Mines Inc., Overgaard (Philippines) Inc. and TVI Resources and Diversified Philippines Inc.

The petitioners said the Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSA) and the Financial or Technical Assistance Agreements (FTAA) issued pursuant to the Mining Act did not provide equitable revenue to the state and allowed private mining firms to keep most of their income despite exploiting the country's natural resources.

An MPSA is an agreement wherein the government grants a company the exclusive right to conduct mining operations in a certain area and shares in the gross output, an FTAA, on the other hand, is a contract which allows mostly foreign corporations to operate large-scale mining projects.

"In the long history of mining in the Philippines, the government has not proven that the revenue from mining has indeed contributed to the general welfare of the country. Instead, it has been a burden to the government and to the people and the local government units (LGUs) affected by it," the petitioners said.

They said that mining companies degraded bodies of water and other natural resources in the process of making a profit.

"Respondents will, in effect, force the petitioners to live worse than animals, left with, out a choice, having [forced them] to drink the water and eat the food which [are] fatally unfit. In addition, the destruction of the environment and natural resources shall lead to the deterioration of residents' sources of livelihood," the petitioners said.

In calling against the MPSAs issued to seven mining firms, they said the government's share is inconsistent, as provided in the Mining Act, and is not equitable.

They cited the findings of the Senate Commission on Nonmetallic Mining Inc. The commission learned that the excise tax collected from the four in 2005, was only P2 million yet its economic benefits to residents were more than P1.2M million.

"This fiscal arrangement is glaringly contradictory to the constitutional provision that the development of the national patrimony should be based on the equitable distribution of wealth," the petitioners said.

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'Filipinos could number 150M if you don't act now'

By Jeannette I. Andrade

INDIA IF A TWO-CHILD POLICY IS ENforced by 2050, the Philippine population is expected to reach 150 million because the poor lack information and access to family planning services, according to a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley, California.

"Even if the country reached replacement level fertility (generalized number of children per family) by 2030, the ultimate population of the Philippines would be 150 million people," said Marlin Muldoon Campbell, and founder president of Venture Strategies for Health Development.

According to its website, Venture Strategies is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health of low-income people in developing countries by using business mechanisms and building on the power of local market forces.

"There is no time to waste to ensure that this country's rapidly rising land for growing food for today's families and also to have remaining forests for tomorrow's children," Campbell said yesterday at a press conference at Subi Hotel to announce the Third National Conference on Population, Health and the Environment to be held in Baguio City on Wednesday to Fri.

She warned that unless the country gives greater emphasis to family planning, there was a danger of increasing poverty. "Even people have big families [now] because they want to but because the poor have no access to contraceptives and health education," she said.

She said United Nations demographers in 2002 projected that the Philippine population would reach between 71 and 85 million, but the population overshot the high projection and now stands at 89 million.

Faster than expected

What the figures show, Campbell stressed, "is population growth is faster than anyone expected."

"If there is another delay... if the Philippines waits another 10 years before really beginning to invest [in] children per family, then we'll arrive 100 million more people living in those beautiful islands [compared to] if every family [would] have only two children," she said, adding that the projection was presented and health specialist from the University of California.

She said that in the 1960s, Thailand and the Philippines each had a population of some 20 million people. Today Thailand has 66 million people compared to the Philippines' 89 million.

"In Thailand, where there is access to contraceptives, uneducated women are rarely planning methods just like women with a college education. In the Philippines, where there is no clear national governmental support for a family planning program, contraceptive use is low — especially among poor and uneducated women, leading to more unintended pregnancies and larger families," Campbell said.

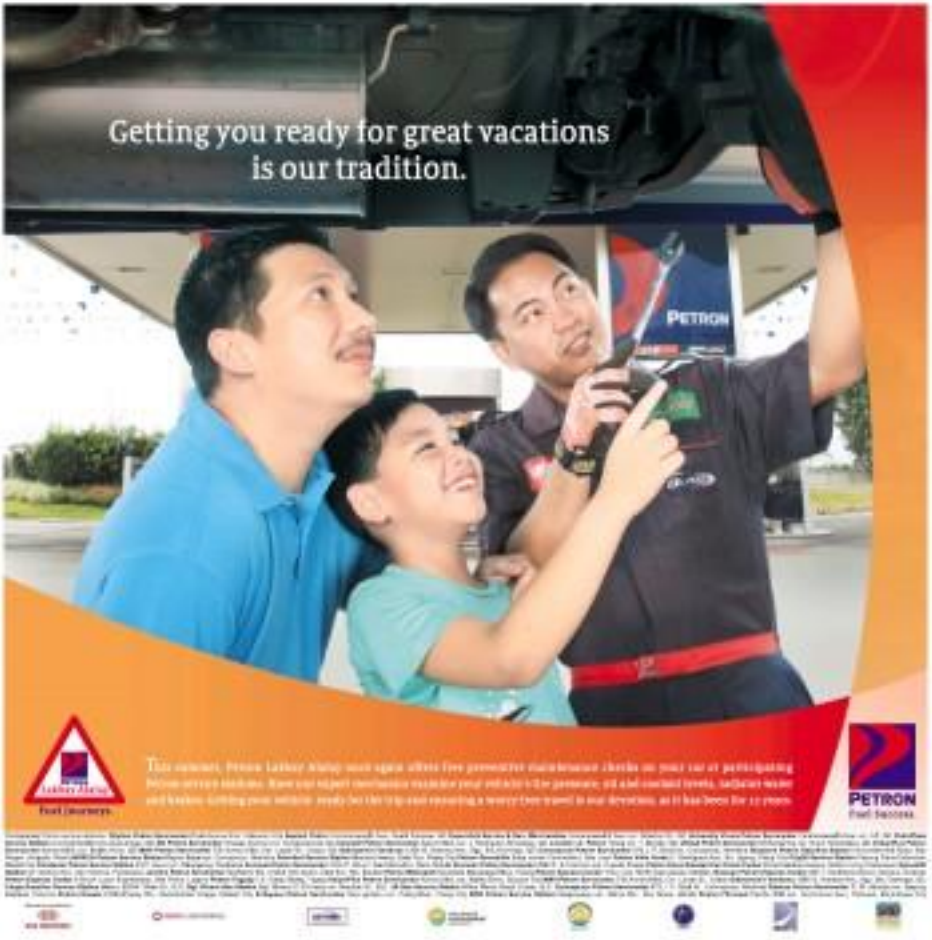
Risks

Washington-based Population Reference Bureau International Programs Director Richard Skolnik said there were many environmental risks to health due to increasing pressure that population growth and migration to cities put on the environment.

"Many problems are here now in the large number of Filipinos who still lack access to safe water and sanitation and who are subjected to indoor and outdoor air pollution," Skolnik said, adding that diarrhea and respiratory infections, especially among poor children, made up 20 percent of the causes of death in the country.

Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development executive director Ramon San Pascual said the impact of population growth on the environment cannot be ignored. "A law on population management and reproductive health is urgently needed."

For his part, Conservation International Philippines country executive director Rodora Tesoro said: "The question is not what needs to be done, but whether or not government units and agencies, the business sectors, support agencies and communities will work together to make it happen. Political will and strong private sector engagement are also required."



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An Urgent Appeal to our People -

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TAX AMNESTY

Amidst all the political distractions that are causing a lot of divisiveness today, here's a way where we can all unite for the common good. ***AVAIL OF THE TAX AMNESTY LAW under R.A. 9480.***
And we have ***only up to MARCH 8, 2008 to do it.***

Availing of the tax amnesty will protect you from any possible civil, administrative or criminal liability that may result from previous non-payment of taxes.

Finally, we must all agree that whatever political persuasion we may have, taxes are needed for the government to render and provide basic services specially to our **POOR** countrymen.

THE TAX AMNESTY IS PARTICULARLY GOOD FOR:

- Large corporations (those in the top 7000 in revenues)
- Professionals like lawyers, doctors, sports and entertainment personalities
- Factories that have misdeclared machinery and equipment acquired on or before 2005 based on the net book value at the time the asset was acquired
- BIR must require **ALL** taxpayers to register their pre-numbered invoices with the VAT No. with the BIR as this will serve as a system of check and balance and aid the tax mapping operations
- Property developers and homeowners who misdeclared their rental income before 2005

HERE'S HOW MUCH YOU WILL PAY:

1. If you have an **INCREASE** in Net Worth (INW)
   a. For individuals, Estates, Trusts, pay 5% on INW or P 50,000 whichever is higher
   b. For Partnerships, Cooperatives, Foundations and all other juridical entities, pay 5% of INW
   c. For Corporations:
      With subscribed capital below P 5 million, 5% of INW or P 25,0000 whichever is higher
      With subscribed capital above p 5 million to P 20 million, 5% of INW or P100,000 whichever is higher
      With subscribed capital above P20 million to P 50 million, 5% of INW or P 250,000 whichever is higher
      With subscribed capital above P50 million, 5 % of INW or P500,000 whichever is higher
2. If you have **NO INCREASE** in Net Worth, pay 5% of **ORIGINAL** Net Worth.

HERE'S HOW TO CORRECT FLAWS AND PLUG LOOPHOLES IN THE TAX SYSTEM:

ISSUE: *Creation of an **Independent Regulatory Body** that will ensure compliance of the Tax Amnesty Law, stop revenue leakage, aim for greater tax compliance and harmonize tax reporting.*

- This oversight body will be composed of the Heads of NEDA, DOF, the Bangko Sentral, Bankers Association of the Philippines and the SEC.
- Taxpayers and corporations that interact with these agencies must provide records using the principles of universality, i.e. revenue or income reported to one agency must be the same amount reported to all other agencies.
- Under this principle of universality, actual field visits to taxpayers' offices will be reduced because transactions are then easily monitored.

ISSUE: *Despite changes in government from 1986, tax-fixing continues to be endemic. **For the past 2 decades, no administration has made a determined effort to fully address the URGENT need for reforms in the BIR and BOC.***

SOLUTION: Require the BIR and BOC to invest heavily in computerization. At present only **51%** of BIR operations is computerized resulting in **VAT** leakages that have run as high as **60%**.

ISSUE: *Indiscriminate Issuance of Tax Account Numbers*

SOLUTION: ***The issuance by the BIR of a NEW computer generated Tax Identification Number (TIN)*** that will replace all existing manually generated TANs many of which are, more often than not, fictitious.

ISSUE: *Non-issuance of receipts resulting in under-declaration of sales*

SOLUTION: To ensure tax audit compliance, all transactions will simultaneously require a TIN invoice VAT No. from suppliers/establishments before they are validated. Because the TINs are computer generated, those who do not issue sales receipts will easily be traced and held accountable.

- Use of water-marked invoices to be issued centrally by the DOF/BIR working in tandem with the Business Sector
- Computerization of tax mapping of properties in all regions nationwide

ISSUE: ***Linking of the BIR and BOC must be done immediately.*** This will result in an indisputable paper trail of import tariff heading, duties and validation. Misdeclaration and undervaluation can be determined immediately, and the proper taxes paid before the shipment is released by the BOC.

ISSUE: *Creative but unscrupulous income reporting and auditing by private practitioners have resulted in underpayment of taxes.*

SOLUTION: All Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) must be re-accredited seeing to it that they comply with accepted international rules of accounting principles and practice.

COPW URGES ONE AND ALL TO SUPPORT THIS CALL TO AVAIL OF THE TAX AMNESTY AND THE SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE OUR TAX SYSTEM.
WE CALL ON EVERYONE - THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, CIVIL SOCIETY, NGOs, CONGRESS AND THE SENATE TO SHOW OUR LOVE FOR COUNTRY BY PAYING THE PROPER TAXES.

LET US ALL FAITHFULLY PAY OUR TAXES WHILE REMAINING VIGILANT AND PROACTIVE IN ENSURING THAT THE TAXES COLLECTED FROM US ARE SPENT PROPERLY AND JUDICIOUSLY.

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Chairman

We will appreciate getting feedback from you.
Text 0917-8103363 if you agree or have any comments on the COPW position. Thank you.

Cayetano: One probe at a time

By Cl C. Cabuenyan Jr.

OPPOSITION SENATORS PAST THE blue ribbon committee to immediately start public hearings on the North Luzon Railway (NorthRail) and South Luzon Railway (SouthRail) projects even as it wraps up its six-month probe of alleged kickbacks in the National Broadband Network (NBN) deal.

But committee chair Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano rejected suggestions by Senators Panfilo Lacson and Jamby Madrigal that he form subcommittees to begin hearings on the Clark-headed railway projects, which were also alleged to have been overpriced.

Cayetano said he preferred to wrap up the NBN hearings in the next two months and then tackle NorthRail and SouthRail one after the other to ensure "quality" output. Cayetano said that so far there was only one witness ready to testify on the NorthRail and SouthRail projects.

In an interview with reporters, Lacson said "just because there's only one available witness does not mean we cannot start the investigation."

"If he (Cayetano) is bogged down by the ZTE probe, he can form subcommittees to take the lead. He should have studied first how big the job of the blue ribbon committee matches accepting the job [of chair]. Corruption knows no timing," Lacson said.

Madrigal said she was likewise surprised that Cayetano did not want to delve into the allegations made by NBN-ZTE ass. nessa Rodolfo Lozada Jr. that the broadband project was patterned after NorthRail, and that the SouthRail project was overpriced by at least $70 million.

Lozada had said the SouthRail deal was brokered by ur. Anthony Abaing and a Mr. Mallari, who were described as the "dealers of the deal" (in reference to the role of former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos in brokering ZTE Corp., for the NBN project.

Madrigal agreed with Lacson that if Cayetano could not handle "multitasking," he should form subcommittees to handle the job in order to satisfy the public concern in resolving these corruption scandals as soon as possible.

But Cayetano would not budge from his position that "you witness does not make an investigation."

"If we give the investigators to subcommittees, we won't be able to examine them and we won't get the result and quality we want," Cayetano said.

Wide media coverage of the Senate hearings on the NBN deal and Lozada's explosive testimony set off the now famous nuisance calling for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation.

Elaborating spokespersons, however, said the number of protesters taking to the streets was not enough to cause alarm.

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A Brotherhood of Leaders: One Vision, One Mission, One Nation

STATEMENT OF THE LEAGUE OF CITIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

The League of Cities of the Philippines hereby manifests its united and solid support to the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and adherence to the Constitution and the Rule of Law.

While there have been indirect allegations imputed against the President, these have not been examined nor proven with strict observance to and compliance with the prosecutorial and judicial proceedings required by our laws. These allegations remain unsubstantiated and lack of veracity. A factual premise for the calls for the President's resignation has not been established.

The political 'noise' which is mainly in Metro Manila does not represent the true sentiments of the people of the Philippines. While some people are out in the streets to rouse mass fervor, a greater number are bound to respect the proper Constitutional means of ferreting out the Truth. And the League of Cities of the Philippines belongs to the greater number – with sobriety and unity.

The League of Cities of the Philippines also affirms its commitment with the President's economic agenda. Our country is already on the road to economic progress as reforms are instituted in different sectors and institutions of our society. We cannot afford to falter.

The League of Cities of the Philippines is for stability and security that will ensure continued investments and economic gains which will benefit the greater good of our country.

We share every Filipino's concern for the Truth and fight against corruption, however, we believe that this must be done following the Rule of Law. To do otherwise will weaken existing institutions in the country.

The people are concerned about the implications of the present situation in the political arena. They want to move on. It is time to focus efforts on real work for the betterment of our countrymen and to put aside bickering and power play which will only benefit those behind the attempts to overthrow the government. The continued provision of roads, better educational and health services, potable water systems, agricultural modernization, housing and other basic services should be the focus of our combined efforts.

Let us hear the voice of the GREATER number of people. The PHILIPPINES IS LUZON, VISAYAS, and MINDANAO!

Let the Constitution and the Rule of Law prevail!

Customs men up in arms over law

By Leila B. Salaverria

IN DANGER OF losing their jobs and slamming they were unjustly blamed by the government's low revenue collection, Bureau of Customs employees yesterday asked the Supreme Court to strike down as unconstitutional the Anti-Smuggling Act of 2005.

Under the act, revenue collectors can be fired if they fail to meet their collection targets.

Rights violated

The BOC Employees Association (Boconaa) said the act violated Republic Act No. 6715, and its implementing rules and regulations should be rescinded because they violated the workers' right to due process. Boconaa said these security of tenure and subjected them to punishment without trial.

Boconaa said dismissed collectors were barred to occupy their revenue collection targets for 2006. This year, the BOC is mandated to collect P284 billion, 13.3 percent more than the previous year's collection of P229 billion. The BOC fell short of its goal but just missing it by only P23.3 billion.

"Even if the objective of this law is to promote morale for the state, it is not sufficient reason to unleash needless and blatantly disregard the rights of government employees," Boconaa said.

Raised separately in the petition were Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales and Revenue Commissioner Glaiza Bello.

Sought for reinstatement, Morales said Bureau should have questioned the law when it was being deliberated in Congress. He said he had no choice but to implement the law otherwise, he would be charged.

The law also provides rewards and incentives to those who meet their targets, said Morales, adding that customs employees were also to receive their rewards one month after the BOC exceeded its 2006 collection target.

Tax breaks

But Bocon argued that RA 9335 "unjustifiably singles out" the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the BOC from among various revenue-generating agencies. Other such agencies are Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., Land Transportation Office and Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

It deplored as well the law's requirement that a performance evaluation be signed by agency employees, reminding that it did not agree with the contents of it.

Boconaa said the law promotes the corruption among BOC and DOF employees in the name of low revenue collections, but ignores the government policies that reduce tariff rates and give tax breaks to big businesses.

According to Boconaa, it is unfair to discipline an employee for failure to meet the targets set by the Performance Evaluation Board without the benefit of a hearing and other procedures as outlined by the Civil Service Commission.

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Priest faces raps for tickling girls

By Jaime R. Balanlacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE CEBU CITY PROSECUTOR has recommended the filing of child abuse charges against a Catholic priest who allegedly cuddled and tickled seven high-school girls while hearing their confessions two years ago.

Reversing an earlier decision dismissing the case, city prosecutor Nicolas Tribiana found probable cause to indict Fr. Romulo Ejares for violation of Section 10 of Republic Act No. 7610, which refers to various forms of child abuse.

Seven Third-year high school students from Abellana National High School accused Ejares of placing his arms around their shoulders, moving his hands down and inserting them inside their sleeves during confession at the presbytery of the Cebu City Sports Complex on Nov. 14, 2006.

Ejares was also accused of pinching and tickling the complainants on their forearms and toying with the straps of their bra during confession.

Mentally, quite badly injurious

"These inappropriate acts, committed by no less than a minister of God and in utter disregard of the solemnity and sanctity of the religious activity, are certainly injurious to the moral and spiritual values of these minor children and, therefore, prejudicial to their development," the prosecutor said.

Tribiana noted that Ejares, in his counter-affidavit, did not deny the acts, except for being with the bra straps, which he said may have been "accidental."

According to the prosecutor, Ejares could not use his usual secret way of hearing confession, which he had objected to, in order to be sure in order to ensure the honesty of the penitents.

In resolutions dated July 4, 2007, and Sept. 29, 2007, assistant city prosecutor Fernando Cabahug dismissed the cases of acts of lasciviousness against Ejares for lack of merit.

But in the modified resolution dated Feb. 29, 2008, Tribiana said Ejares could be held liable for violation of Section 10 of the Child Abuse Act that covers other acts of abuse.

Section 10 (a) of RA 7610 could extend to acts that merely disturb a child psychologically and emotionally, even without touching the child's body, he said.

"Psychological abuse is merely one form of child abuse and is separate and distinct from those other modes of child abuse," the resolution said.

Rains abort unity walk of 77 mayors

PRESIDENT Masagana Jerseys leaves while Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas reads the manifesto of support from mayors who are members of the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), at the Premier Hotel in Manila Monday

Paragraph 1
members League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), told reporters that the protest actions against Ms Arroyo were occurring only in Metro Manila and not in the provinces. "Manila is not the Philippines," said Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, LCP president.

On Friday, however, protesters had to scramble to avoid the downpour that drenched the country, although much smaller than the thousands assembled in Makati City.

The rallies were held in spite of the truck in the P526-million Hyatt Terraces Broadband Network (HTBN) project that the President canceled amid allegations of bribery and corruption involving her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, and former Commissioner on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos. Arroyo and Abalos have denied the charges.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said "the protest movement may continue, but we seriously doubt if these will gather momentum as expected by those who want the ouster of the President."

3rd walk

Bunye was reacting to former President Corazon Aquino's statement on Sunday that the people must prepare for a long fight and that protest actions might force Ms Arroyo to resign.

The planned unity walk yesterday was supposed to be the third staged by Makabayang Koalisyon ng Mamamayan (Bayan) secretary-general Renato Reyes.

Yesterday, it was supposed to be the mayors' turn, but the plan was ruined out.

The local executives told Palace reporters that the country should move on to "more important" matters, such as building more roads and improving public services, and let the HTBN controversy be settled in the courts rather than Senate hearings.

Statements of support

Iloilo Mayor Mamerto Fernando asked the people to be sober in their views. Her husband, Batanes Fernando, a chair of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Treñas said 77 mayors signed the LCP statement of support for Ms Arroyo, which they gave her at their meeting yesterday. The Presidents thanked the mayors for their support, Pajarillo said.

"The political noise, which is mainly in Metro Manila, does not represent the true sentiment of the people of the Philippines," the LCP said. "While some people are out in the streets to create mass hysteria, a greater number are bound to respect the proper constitutional means of removing our the truth."

The mayors, it said, "belong to the greater number—with solemn and sanity."

Separate statement

Nine mayors in Metro Manila issued a separate statement of support. They were Marikina's Bernardo, Felicisimo Belmonte Jr. of Quezon City, Benjamin Abalos Jr. of Mandaluyong, Fernando Reyes Jr. of Pasig, Alfredo Lim of Manila, Jejomar Binay of Makati, Celso Lobregat of Navotas, Lito Atienda of Caloocan and Efren Echivarri of Valenzuela.

They expressed the fear that the continuing Senate hearing on the HTBN controversy "will lead to more divisiveness and chaos."

Local gov't needs

"We're spending too much time (on congressional investigations) to the point [that] we're neglecting what local governments need," Celso Mayor Teresa Oreña said.

When was allowing the mayors was the "cream in Metro Manila" but the bulk of support from Cagayan, Daniela said. Local government officials need Congress' cooperation on many issues close to their hearts, he said.

In Antipas, around 500 officials and community leaders signed a manifesto in support of Ms Arroyo.

"We truly believe that the present administration is exerting extra effort to improve the political, economic and social environment of the country as manifested by the social reform agenda of the President," said the manifesto released by Gov. Salvador Taddeus Pineda.

They said the country's economic conditions under the present administration had improved and that these would only be "wasted if we allow ourselves to be fooled by the opposition's propaganda." With a report from Nestor F. Burgos Jr., Inquirer Visayas

Lozada says sorry anew for love affairs

STANDING TALL Rodolfo Noel "Jun" Lozada Jr. candidly talks about his indiscretions with students at Adamson University in Manila Monday

Paragraph 1
dents at Adamson University in Manila, the former government consultant who asked by a student during an open forum about the truths in the reports that there was "third party" in his life.

Lozada said that he had already admitted the existence of such a "third party" despite his being married to his wife, Victoria.

He added: "If you're the one bringing the light, this light would also expose your dirt on the public."

"I have accepted all that," he said.

Lozada then asked the audience gathered at the university quadrangle if they could forgive his past mistakes.

The crowd answered with a thunderous "yes."

In an interview with reporters, Lozada said that his extramarital relationship was over.

Others, too

Lozada pointed out, however, that there were many people "who have dual yourses."

"Your sin will not justify my sin," he said.

The broadcast star welcome in its parties was the National Broadband Network (NBN) bribery scandal also said: "If you're the one carrying the trunk of mud, people will definitely try to destroy you in every way they can."

Sister Lozada's regards about alleged senseless in the NBN project, messages have objected about his supposed relationship with a woman named "Thelma," with whom he purportedly had three children.

In Tondo last week, he also said he had done his wife wrong—without specifying what his "sin" was—and that she had already forgiven him.

At an interfaith rally in Makati City on Friday, Lozada had also asked his forgiveness for mistakes he had committed in his life.

Focus on the truth

Lozada told his Adamson audience that the adulations he had been getting from the students during his campus tours was beyond his expectations.

"I am not used to all this ovation], and I'm not looking for it," Lozada said to the screaming crowd.

"After all, those who sang the hallelujahs were the same people who demanded (the Lord's) crucifixion," he said.

Even a demon

At one point, Lozada asked the students to focus on finding out the truth about the NBN deal, instead of dwelling on other issues, such as demanding the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

However, he later said that Ms Arroyo should not be allowed to stay in Malacañang until 2010.

Former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., the man who Lozada claimed brokered the NBN deal for a commission of P130 million, yesterday challenged his accusers to a public confrontation.

"I don't care, I will face even a demon," Abalos said in Filipino.

Abalos challenged Lozada and Commission on Higher Education Chair Romulo Neri to a debate over the deal.

"Who knows? They might turn into saints when I finally face them," Abalos told the reporters.

Neri had said in his Senate testimony that Abalos offered him P200 million to approve the NBN project when he was head of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Abalos and he was confident "there are also many open minded students out there who want to hear my side" of the story.

"I'd rather give my side to these students... It's better to sit down and talk with them than answer questions of the Senate," he said. He did not elaborate.

For a start, Abalos said he "would love to speak to students of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines," who gave Lozada a warmer welcome last week.

"Much as I wanted to challenge (Lozada, Neri and their lawyers) to a public debate, my only concern is I don't want to distract them from their forthcoming final examinations and other school activities. Many schools, I understand, are holding their graduation exercises shortly," Abalos said.

In the spirit of fairness

Abalos' lawyer, Salvador Panelo, urged students and civic associations to "maintain objectivity" to "generate a venue for both sides so the truth supervises rules and subject both of them to the rigorous tests of cross-examination from the audience."

The militant Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) said today that it will organize Abalos' group on his own campus soon.

ACT chair Antonio Tinio said he was "sure that teachers and students will give him the welcome he deserves...Biting him on, we'll be ready for him."

Malacañan on their tweak Lozada-Abalos debate: "In the spirit of fairness, by all means. But Abalos must be debriefed if he didn't he'll be receiving the same welcome the students have given Lozada. Has he not heard that the students have just declared their school credit zones?" With a report from Kristine Alave

SC tackles executive privilege issue today

Paragraph 1
speak, whether in an executive session or before the Supreme Court or Senate, his minister.

He said it was also possible the court would rule on whether to issue a temporary restraining order on the Senate's arrest warrant against Neri, which was issued after he failed to heed the subpoena in connection with the probe of the NBN-ZTE deal.

Neri has asked the court to stop the implementation of the Senate's arrest warrant, issued after he was cited in contempt. He told the court that the only reason for his absence at the Senate hearing was the President's directive that he invoke executive privilege.

Earlier, Neri testified that he had told the President about the alleged P200 million offered to him by former Election Chair Benjamin Abalos in exchange for endorsing the NBN project, which Ms Arroyo scrapped following allegations of bribery that implicated her husband.

Neri declined to answer further questions on his conversations with Ms Arroyo, although subsequent testimony and news reports said that she had told Neri, who was then secretary general of the National Economic and Development Authority, to ignore the bribe but to approve the deal.

Dean Amado Valdez of the University of the East College of Law said Neri "cannot hide under this executive privilege to cover up the commission of the crime, although he could claim right against self-incrimination."

Watergate case

In a brief interview with reporters, Valdez also pointed to the US Supreme Court ruling that then President Richard Nixon could not stop the subpoena of audiotapes of his conversations on the Watergate scandal because the demands of criminal justice were high.

He said the privilege could only be used when matters of national security were at stake.

"First are only invoke executive privilege when he is already asked a particular question," Valdez said, adding he should not have ignored the Senate subpoena.

Public interest

Lawyer Harry Roque also quoted the decision in the Philippine case that held presidential privilege "cannot prevail over the fundamental demands of the process of law in the fair administration of criminal justice."

"Applying the principle of the Nixon decision by the US Supreme Court, public interest should prevail," Roque said.

He said that the Philippine Supreme Court's decision in April 2006 on Executive Order No. 464 showed that executive privilege could not be used as a blanket authority to deny all requests for information during congressional inquiries in aid of legislation.

"Even invoking executive privilege also have to explain why they are doing so, and it is up to the court to decide whether this is correct, Roque said.

Marquez said the court's decision in April 2006 on EO 464 focused mainly on the order to present and not on executive privilege in particular.

"The Supreme Court ruled in accordance that the EO 464 provision prohibiting Cabinet members, police and military officials from attending congressional hearings in aid of legislation without the President's consent.

However, the tribunal held the appearances during the question hour when lawmakers grill officials of the executive branch on its implementation of laws are not mandatory.

Not all right, sirs? Ping slams Gringo

From page A1

into the country's current political rivalries.

This was how Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson yesterday questioned Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan's statement earlier that he (Honasan) considered the other day in Davao demanding the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo, in a narrow line of friction between the two former classmates in the Philippine Military Academy.

"It's not that Honasan is not to comment on this issue," said Lacson, referring to his "alumni" in PMA (Class '71). "He has no right to talk about that issue because of his lack of moral authority."

He claimed that when he divulged the military and the police (with his own rank at stake), many of the officers were investigated and jailed and many families suffered as a consequence," Lacson told reporters.

He is concerned as fun-flap, Honasan, a key player in the military mutiny that sparked the 1986 Edsa People Power Revolution against the then-Marcos dictatorship, urged anti-arroyo groups not to be rash in seeking military intervention.

Honasan then warned that soaring "division" in the military and police could be bloody this time around...unlike during the Edsa I revolt.

He also cautioned the military and the police to abandon entirely the administration. If you do get outta fashion, you will divide the only legally armed group in our society," he said.

"To those inviting the military to join them in today's unconstitutionality in case of an armed uprising, I'll be the first to denounce bloody, whether we like it or not, are you going to stand to the fronthaus for your beliefs, at all costs, to fight for the truth?"

Honasan, who Edsa I revolt and before he entered politics, Honasan was as an Army colonel who led renegade troops against then President Corazon Aquino in failed coup attempts that left scores dead in 1987 and 1989. He was never tried but subsequently pardoned amnesty.

Honasan was again linked to plots launched by a low-ranking core of military officers, this time against the Arroyo administration, including the botched 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

Lacson, meanwhile, was a law enforcer who had his own share of controversies on his way to becoming chief of the Philippine National Police under the Estrada administration.

Military top brass

Honasan's words of caution, though, drew approval from the military top brass.

Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr said he agreed with Honasan's view that soaring division in the AFP or provoking it through a so-called "crisis of Army" by outside or other forces could lead to violence.

Speaking to reporters in Clark Field, Pampanga, Esperon maintained that the majority of the AFP remained loyal to the Constitution and the chain of command.

"If there is a threat of harm, we are allowed to bear arms. It can be violent," Esperon said. "We are making a stand that the military should not be drawn into this. It would be better for us to stick to our mandate."

The AFP chief of staff was in Clark yesterday for the closing ceremonies of the 9PAB Sta Maesa 2008 held at the former US air base.

Also on the sidelines of the event, Army chief Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, who is set to succeed the retiring Esperon on May 9, said the military "cannot be used for every whim."

"Using the military is a quick fix ... expedient to some. But the military will be useless if that's the case. Because it's any upheaval or crisis, will we call on the military?" Yano said.

Now plot failed

In a separate interview, Esperon said a group of retired military generals and rebel soldiers had tried recruiting commanders and junior officers to join efforts to overthrow President Arroyo but that this activity was immediately stopped.

He declined to identify the retired generals and reiterated troops or the units that were targeted for recruitment, wherein the justice secretary earlier charged self-phones and the Internet.

According to Esperon, the recruitment was foiled after the commanders and junior officers approached by the suspects reported the matter to their superiors.

Asked if the suspects were the same as those involved in the June 29 Peninsula Manila standoff, Esperon said: "I would imagine so. But what we could draw from this is that in the first place, they have sense to now focus to we do not expect new people or new faces in future destabilization activities."

"We want to (catch) them in the act. There is a great level of deniability because they will not acknowledge that they have known each and each place, but we will still keep watch over them," Esperon said. With reports from Nikko Dizon and Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

JFFF last year, then senatorial candidates Panfilo Lacson and Gregorio Honasan appeared to be the best of friends as they had meals in a restaurant in Quezon City. YOY SANTOS

Move to oust JDV as Lakas head put off

From page A1

ay," daggers were again unsheathed to decapitate De Venecia from the Lakas-CMD leadership.

But the presidential cooler heads prevailed at the party's executive committee (Execom) meeting that lasted five hours. It ruled the task of ousting De Venecia in a 2008 strong cadre of dissonance that will meet on March 18 to what was billed as a party "reorganization."

All pandemic would be declared vacant, so it would not appear that the move was aimed at getting rid of De Venecia, who was not packing as Speaker but remain after his namesake son blew the wheel in on the scandal-tainted National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China that had sparked demands for Mr Arroyo's resignation.

However, there was talk of making the Senate "president emeritus." Exactly what it means remains unclear, although one participant who did not wish to be named said "nothing, that's why it's emeritus."

"It's about time we make it a democratic process," said Sen. Jose Miguel Arroyo, secretary general of Lakas, one of the nation's most dominant political parties.

"All our positions are not sacred and we may be replaced. But we are changing people not for the person, not just former Speaker De Venecia. It may be us, the vice presidents, we may all be changed," Zubiri said.

The decision to postpone the matter of elections to next week, he stressed, was made to "good faith" because De Venecia was still in the United States and would have been unable to attend.

Nut cruisers

Zubiri said the committee did not want to act like "traitors" and would await De Venecia, who was due back by March 10. "We have to show the people that we have to be statesmanlike about this," he said.

Among the 19 Lakas officials who attended the meeting were cheerleaders of De Venecia and former Presidents Fidel Ramos and potential presidential candidate in the upcoming 2010 elections—Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando and Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.

Also in attendance were House Speaker Prospero Nograles, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, former Rep. Prospero Pichay, Rep. Simeon Datumanong, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Rep. Eduardo Gullas, Secretary Gabriel Claudio, Secretary Silvestre Bello III, Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol, Secretary Hebrerson Abaya, Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, Rep. Eduardo Gullas, Gov. Jose Ong, Rep. Arthur Defensor, Gov. Aklan Cawas Harris and Raymundo Roquero.

Zubiri said that the Execom members unanimously believed that De Venecia, the party's cofounder, "should remain with Lakas" although not as president.

"He is director international

FORMER President Fidel Ramos (seated, third from left) with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Speaker Prospero Nograles and former Sen. Heherson Alvarez (seated, left to right) and other members and officers of the Lakas-CMD before the start of their executive meeting at the Manila Hotel Monday. RICHARD ECHALAR

by and president of the Asian wing of Christian Democratic Int. So we have to take that into consideration," he said.

Open voting

Zubiri stressed that party rules dictated that "the elections of the officers have to be done through the calling of a national assembly or an expanded national directorate."

"Not sure if we were present we can't a person from the party or from his position as party leader," the senator said.

Definitely it will be an open voting," said Pichay, a Lakas vice president. "We cannot speak for all the members of the national directorate so we have to bring it up to them as far as the fate of JDV is concerned."

He added: "We have to correlate the party in preparation for 2010. I think there are those who want new faces, new leaders for the party because we have to be very aggressive this time."

More than 500 Lakas-CMD members are expected to attend the meeting that will also tackle amendments to the party's constitution and by-laws. Zubiri said, adding that it had been five years since they have held a national directorate.

'Let's not put new holes'

Ramos proposed offering De Venecia the post of "presidente emeritus," ostensibly in a face-saving gesture.

"For God's sake, let's not put new holes into this ship of state, much less damage it beyond repair, which is what some people want to happen," Ramos said.

Pichay said a decision was taken to send some Execom members to talk to De Venecia upon his return and sound him out on the options proposed.

"The game plan is to manage him," said Zubiri.

A Lakas leader who did not wish to be named said the grasp would urge De Venecia to reconsider his call on Mr Arroyo to resign.

House Speaker Prospero Nograles said a "win-win" solution was being sought because the party also did not want to lose De Venecia.

Zubiri said that he, Venecia should first sit at the national directorate meeting to be given the position. Among the proposed amendments to the constitution and by-laws were the "creation of new positions."

Merger

The merger of Lakas-CMD and Kampi will also be discussed in the national directorate, Pichay said.

"We will get the views and opinions of members and hopefully agree or disagree to merge with them," he said.

Asked to comment on JDV's statement that he will not resign from Lakas, Pichay said: "He is not the party. He cannot resign from the party. It is hard for us to respect the decision of the members of the party."

Ramos said Mr Arroyo, Lakas chair, will attend the March 18 meeting and will abide by the decision of the majority. With reports from Gerhard B. Glang, Norman Bordadora, Beverly T. Natividad and Christine O. Avendaño

Ohio, Texas races too close to call

From page A1

He also leads 47 percent to 45 percent in Ohio, a tournament boon Clinton's 5 point advantage in that state.

Obama has edged out big leads in the last two weeks to leads ones for Clinton, a former first lady to the final days of Tuesday's primaries, however, neither candidate has managed to dominate the race.

"There are no big movements, no great swings, there are just very tight races," pollster John Zogby said. "At least for now it doesn't look like either one of them is going to be winning in a blowout."

370 delegates at stake

A total of 370 delegates are at stake in Tuesday's Democratic primaries in Ohio, Texas and the smaller northeastern states of Vermont and Rhode Island.

Obama's aides said privately that they felt they had a good shot at a win in Texas, but were less certain about Ohio. Other polls show Clinton leading in Rhode Island and Obama winning in Vermont.

Obama has enjoyed one big lead

INQUIRER

OPINION

Martial law?

EDITORIAL

THE LIBERTY OF ABODE AND OF CHANGING THE same within the limits prescribed by law shall not be impaired except upon lawful order of the court. Neither shall the right to travel be impaired except in the interest of national security, public safety or public health, as may be provided by law." (Boldface supplied.)

"No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression or of the press or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances."

Article 13 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state."

These are among the constitutional provisions and international covenants that the administration and its minions in the police and the military violated last Friday when they prevented thousands of participants from Southern Luzon and other areas from attending the interfaith rally to Mahal City.

They also violated these provisions and covenants when they declared the Makati Business District a no-fly zone, preventing ABS-CBN from flying its Skyguard helicopter and taking aerial shots of the rally. Aerial shots would have shown the true size and extent of the crowd that was protesting corruption in government and urging the disclosure of the truth about the anomalous MRS-2TL deal.

About 38 busloads of students from Cavite were denied entry to Manila when they reached the Coastal Road. At the boundary of Cabuyao and Calamba, Laguna, policemen stalled several hundred motorists for more than five hours before allowing them to go on their ways to Makati.

In Quezon City, police agents blocked about 400 University of the Philippines students and professors who were on their way to join the rally. In some places in Cavite, buses reportedly "broke down" and effectively blocked the flow of traffic to Makati. But people were asking why, if the buses developed engine trouble, they were positioned across the road and not parallel to the road.

These are just some of the incidents reported on radio, television and in the newspapers last Friday and Saturday. These acts of the military and the police reduced the number of participants in the rally to the center of the Makati Business District.

Also suspicious and highly irregular was the sudden and unprecedented declaration of the Makati Business District as a no-fly zone for the three hours that the rally was scheduled. The Air Transportation Office said the notice to airmen was issued "for security reasons so that no one would suspect that those flying by are taking pictures, doing surveillance to identify them (the protesters)." Suddenly, the administration has become sensitive to the sensibilities of protesters!

The temporary ban prevented ABS-CBN from taking shots that would have shown the extent and the size of the crowd. The crowd was definitely much, much larger than the 10,000 to 15,000 estimate of the police.

This administration, its officials and military and police minions will do anything, tell half truths, lie, kidnap witnesses and probably even kill them—but for the realtime media coverage—and do other immoral and illegal acts to ensure the continuance of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the presidency.

The acts of the military and the police and of air transport officials last Friday violated several human rights provisions of the Constitution and of an international covenant to which the Philippines is a signatory. It is good that the United Opposition is planning to file charges against the administration officials responsible for preventing participants from various points of Luzon from attending the interfaith rally. We suggest that ABS-CBN also file a complaint against the ATO for declaring the rally site a no-fly zone.

We cannot allow administration, police and military officials to ride roughshod over our right to travel and move freely and to peaceably assemble to tell the government to redress our grievances. We cannot allow these officials to restrict the right of the press—and of the people—to exercise freedom of expression so that they would have access to information that they need to be able to make the right decisions. Surrendering these rights would embolden the Arroyo administration to tighten what is beginning to look like martial law and impose a dictatorship.

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Impunity's toll

VIEWPOINT

Jose L. Mercado

JOURNALIST BOBI ALAMBAY AND A LATIN American colleague were discussing how unpunished murder on prominent targets destroys democratic governance. Suddenly, the heads of Peninsula Hotel lobby posers overheard Jennifer Marcelino had walked in. Without missing a beat, head musicians struck up "Dahil Sa Iyo."

"That's impunity!" Alambay told his friend. Five were murdered for the Maguindanao dynasty's crimes. And "Impunity not Press Freedom" was the conference theme that brought 140 delegates from nine countries to Manila.

"Climate against #impunity escalates and the impunity that has become a culture to those that the press is so vulnerable here so it is in Latin America," latter-day poet Press Association's Ricardo Trotti said. "The press needs to denounce the issue in those countries which cooperate—declare."

The Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility said Southeast Asian Press Alliance organized the meeting at exchange expectations of other countries. Correspondents were the Open Society Institute and Committee to Protect Journalists.

Since 1986, around 71 Filipino newsmen have been "salvaged." Of them, 24 were murdered during the Arroyo regime. Thirty-two fresh investigations, dates from 1986 to 2007, journalists were murdered in over a decade. Seven journalists also take the "disappeared").

Impunity's "natural catholicism," you know, are free to denounce in a coup, terrorism or crime. Impunity's "natural catholicism," you know, are free to denounce in a coup, terrorism or crime. Impunity's "natural catholicism," you know, are free to denounce in a coup, terrorism or crime.

Grimes against journalists have risen. "Two are different countries, the Philippines and Russia, share two traits, they're among the world's deadliest countries for journalists and among the most corrupt," Transparency International's (TI's) Jose Ugaz. Organized crime and government corruption are major dangers.

In Colombia, the trick is uncovered some years. Its cocaine's gross national product. This illicit income tops whole sectors of society. "Drug cartels infiltrate the core with bribes," he pointed. Justice Eduardo Perdiz advised caution. "It's [journalist's] choice to go public."

Failure to halting criminals' harassment can end in impunity, added their "disappeared" murders, who delivered to military pickups, were "neutralized." Children's military families often were adopted by parents.

In the Philippines, money from warlords, companies and officials corrupts law enforcement, according to former Defense Assistant Secretary Ruben Carranza, now of the International Center for Transitional Justice. Civilian paramilitary units, like the Cafgus, "get funding from political leaders like the Binaguenos and Eduardo Cojuangcos." Cafgus rule does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, as in Peruvian Supreme rule matters is ignored.

Some solutions or complaints to killings include in "a conveyance of the dead and the death," Chief Justice Reynato Puno told the delegates. The complaints of people who were those ex-officials, "Puno added.

Some soldiers and policemen moonlight as executioners. They're shielded by joining the rest of human crimes. These agencies are "corrupted" by drug money. Even the military does budgeted governments not to pass 180 member nations that signed up for the International Criminal Court, Carranza said.

Juvenile (Rodrigo Gaga's "Bloody Summer" provides for "command responsibility." Edi Jasmin's Cordon-ing Dining noted. Commanders and superiors should be criminally liable for crimes committed by their forces. The military has their legal recourse to duck questions on disappeared, like Jonas Burgos and others.

Taking a leaf from Latin America, the Punong Lingayen collapsed after both of empires. "In a time-de-pressure those whose right to life, liberty and security is threatened," these summary proceedings have been denied.

The initial 14 suits forced the military to produce persons they detained holding. "They didn't want their camps searched," said the writ forced their freedom of control like Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile to a contempt with disappearances.

Still, the writ of impunity couldn't. The writ is self, said Supreme Court Justice Adolf Azcuna. Since 1976, Azcuna worked to give the writ into the Constitution. But it was only in 2006 that the court worked with a rules for the writ. The amparo has been used to victims' protection to Commando, where it can take seven years just to reopen a just-solid's cavaders case.

"Some journalists don't see violence against media as violent offense against press freedom," the ombudsman noted. And the average person doesn't see violence as a threat to democracy.

Thirteen against volunteers parents. "Often, they're really, really, really scared," noted rough prime prosecutor Nesly Santos, who is credited for getting convictions for suppression in the murder of Palawan's journalist Marlene Esperat. Interrogation identified the masterminds as the Esperat and Edgar Interdonato cases. "Three murders can be stopped only when you can get to the masterminds, are held responsible," Santos' rights advocate Bernie Bolasa said.

Keep in mind that behind each [murder], there is a [number] with a face and last name who died for defending a much," Trotti said. "They are unions. Orphans. Memory to impunity."

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FAQ

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE'S AN FAQ ("FREQUENTLY ASKED Question" for the uninitiated) you get to hear about three. It is "How do you get rich off GMA? Or rid you to get?"

It's a question I've heard, or seen, in various guises. One of the most bizarre is people saying that while they believe GMA is corrupt as hell, they're not joining any move to make her resign because they can't imagine who will succeed Mike as evil was evil 2013. Since the huge lady has Friday she questioned whether Mike was evil. If the situation is urban to resign—as the lady talk—what does it? What can we do?

Well, first off, if GMA won't resign, now, who makes you think she'll do so in 2010? As many surveyors say, if she resigns now, the vulture remedy vulnerable. One of people she can be prosecuted like Erap, and will most likely be to prove that she conspires with Mike Arroyo, Jueteng lords, that of course, she can have a door not filed against her by the list of the victims of human rights abuses, and will most likely be to go to the killings and abductions, notably of journalists. And then she can be tried for plunder. Once it proves she will have locked down to jail.

But for those very same reasons, why on earth would she give up power in 2010? The impetus to resign is that because by then the time will be up.

My question then is: So what? Why should someone whose main motive began the business by the fact that she has more to up? Why should someone who didn't mind changing the rules in 2004 to not only hold a club...in 2002 when she said she wouldn't run would interpret the rules in 2010? Certainly, her need to stay in power would remain just as desperate then as it was more so then, now.

The GMA regime's biggest objective is not corruption, it is corruption. Or its biggest drive is not the theft of money, it is the theft of the vote. A President who doesn't mind rolling like grotesquely stolen votes must mind rolling illegitimately stolen votes. She won't make her go now, you can't make her go then.

The point is not for her to resign, it is for us to force her to resign. You do not send criminals to jail with their permission, you send them to jail with their free consent, whether they like it or not. The rules are not guaranteed in the face of an unwilling subject. The criminal is not forced to submit to the rules of the game. Even without a military solution, there's no denying we can become a stronger force. Though without this, I don't know why the officers and generals of the AFP shouldn't reconsider their solution to sit with the help of the people. The duty of a soldier is to follow the chain of command, it is not to be a lackey the chain of evil. The duty of a soldier is to obey no order that serves and protects their oppressors.

The fascinating and inviting age afforded this "showing orders" loses no reason to happening right and wrong. You obey an order to massacre people, you're guilty when the time comes. You disobey him order, you can hold your head up high and call yourself a true soldier as you stand.

Again, apart from that, there is always the prospect of becoming bigger and bigger rallies. Every undemocratic the power of an idea, never underestimate the force of moral reason. The people who went to Ayala last Friday were right. The crowd was by estimates. Never mind estimates the power of conviction. They were unique ideas that brought forth the souls of illusions in the past, they are humming tunes that will break forth the conquests of right. The bigger and bigger rallies are the sign of the times, the writing on the wall. On his and on the rabble. They prompt the end of tyranny.

And still quite apart from that, there is the weapon of civil disobedience. There is the weapon of [not very] precise [not very]. If it is still right, then it is used by Cory and company more than two decades ago when they were fighting Marcos. And if I recall right, that was encouraging for those rules were fighting Erap [not] to obey [not] to [not] to [not] to [not]. Erap then [not] will not [not] the weapon would be used. It is natural use, the duress was powerful enough.

In fact, there's no reason could therefore, that's never done that until it's the leader fitting to make Filipinos do, it's the correct thing to make as not do. Which is when civil disobedience or passive resistance consists of not doing. It is, in breach of some support, not filing taxes (which will contain the withholding of taxable income from a foreign government), not withholding that much of your hard-earned pay is already taken from you by withdrawal tax and indirect taxes), not sending the OFWs in particular of remittances through official channels (the fines and less from which, is chosen by Filipinos), endless and only to fund the election campaign of administration candidates), being absent en masse from government offices, including the PNP and AFP (impossible, of course, since even those cops and soldiers suddenly being awaken that the day they are supposed to bash the heads of demonstrators), and so on. Past history such is included in the list.

But the strongest that this will derail the economy and make it ungovernable. You can always resole. Sending money directly the economy sending the rest is, well, there subverting democracy, it's just plain evil. The principle is simple. The citizens do not surrender to the state unconditionally. Its duty is to protect the people, not their criminal leader. If the dispensation President refuses to go, a legitimate citizenry can always refuse to obey. An unarmed leader refuses to disappear, a unarmed citizenry can always refuse to oppose.

The only question about doesn't to use but to as suspense.

Why rally didn't succeed as touted

FORMER PRESIDENT CORAZON AQUINO HAS QUICKly set aside that Filipinos should prepare for a "peaceful fight against dictatorship" she called in 2005. Mr Speaker, come to this conclusion after she decided people power rally of Makati on Friday, also which the rest gathered in convening the "indictment" of the people convicted his senator of corruption against the president. The allegation rally was not considered to 70,000 by opposition leaders, but the police said it was more like 15,000, or already a poor audience turnout. If not more as indication where who wants the ouster of Arroyo, the other hand, is also related to watch a political relentless, the opposite figure would perhaps be somewhere in between. But whatever the real rally figure was, the fact remains that the rally of Aquino and company was not enough to fill the Ayala and the opposition.

There were many reasons for last Friday's rapid turnout. One was the appearance of the usual opposition leaders who have been discredited in the earlier round of people power, such as former President Joseph Estrada and reborn like Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay. Another is that the star witness on whom Mr. Iqueen has brought to another her round on Friday, Rodolfo Noel Lacierda, was not present and unable to lead it. On the eve of the rally, Radyo Patrol came out with a story about his accused family and managed to frame three reddishness-linked Lacierda's record of the opposition rallies from which he reasonably resigned is unsaid and with evidence about not to prove corruption and high living, such as taking the three to an exclusive golfing spot. But the effect on his behalf, with his wife suffering the consequences, and various opposition practices. In the hearings terminated, the star witness was also discredited Lacierda's record of the opposition rallies officials as well as the opposition—to what seems like a plot to contribute to the destabilization of government.

All Lacierda has done so far is to admit to all his sins and say he's sorry, but he does not owe both to or explain why he committed them. Some cases are all-round by the schools' and chambers' seeming inebriation and double-standard about the star witness. In one such incident mentioned, Mabel Ho, Bayan Ko President, told by Father Kilaglo, Jaramillo he called "evidence weapon," after speaking of a self-confessed adulterer and small-time pusher as a hero in their premises," which could not be considered as the evidence. She suggested that instead of allowing hooting and previous time for rallies and disruptive acts that do not really threaten the "truth," given the historically-based in the hero-and-evil circles in senators and other persons should hand the formation of crash-hour court commission "made up of persons of unassailable integrity and competence" for this purpose.

Many senators are also launching issues like Espino and the mass and parties rush his to stop pending Lacierda in prayer rallies and working Holy Communion rally by side with them, in other word also a double-standard of the hobbled, gives the senators he has no proof.

There are many other reasons why the next EDSA ouster is not going anywhere. One is that the 2010 election is just around the corners and political parties are not busy organizing as the senators; if he political organization is the opposition could be a strong force, but the next election activities there would be against EDSA. Some pundits have noted here, post-dental aspirants have started during the senators hearings—a clear indication that the senate needs doubtless fronted that it would only benefit the leading presidential contender, based on the surveys, and GMA's political foe, Vice President Noli de Castro. Then, too, there's the fear that GMA's sudden departure from the scene would only result in chaos, as various opposition groups push for different replacements. For many of them, De Castro is the least palatable option.

It stand who participated in Indecision-minutes, they leading to the July 2005 GMA-ouster, seemed to be the only ones who were the opposition groups spent more time fighting among the victory the leaders would take power and in what form it would be—constitutional succession, a revolutionary junta or a caretaker government. Some senators said snap elections are called. The parties and their senators were so busy formulas for leadership at three-star groups. A well-known husband and wife team at least in their own family wanted to serve in the caretaker government. At the just-in-the rallies senator had already failed and still the opposition groups leader's found the target instead of Arroyo. In 2006, it was another story.

For this year's ouster move, the opposition has limited, or at a taken power which it hopes would snowball. Doubtless, the vacillators are frustrated with people power, having only found order at it. But in every battle, it only has to win once, after which the soldiers will go home to the positions. A columnist exhorted the students to remain in Ghent Manila to continue their activities, but they would need a lot more than that to mobilize. Some government will have to decide.

There, too, there's the undeniable fact that the economy is not doing very well. Any fool, indeed, can it is not last October, it's very difficult to run economy's leader in the economy is performing very well. Only 38 cents and I learned for the Philippine Stock Exchange Index, the value of the united under President Ramos and Estrada, late Sunday as one 4 p.m. (LBO) progress and he spoke about bad loans and told members to make up this sentence. I'll write about this on Thursday.

Sharing in Zamboanga

Rina Jimenez-David

HE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO TEST WHAT HAS been dubbed the "number of all sleep-deep" or even the lawyer-trade modern, but a visit last Friday to Zamboanga proved to be productive and rejuvenated.

I had joined the Filipina Cruiser March team for an outreach session on the "Magna Carta of Women," which is pending before Congress. Co-sponsored by Zamboanga City Rep. Maria Isabelle Climaco-Salazar and the Philippine Commission on Women, the forum gathered women from Zamboanga, Basilan, Jolo, Tawi-Tawi, and Pagadian, who came to find out what the Magna Carta is all about and whether it could benefit Filipino women.

Zamboanga City Mayor Celso Lobregat came to deliver the opening remarks, proudly declaring that his native metropolis dubbed "Asia's Latin City," "we are not considered as the most backward and the ugliest of women." As proof, Lobregat cited the "country's first ever women master-swimming" in Zamboanga years ago, as well as how the four Darbishing Lees. The mayor's ruling—a full-blooded Chinese—could be seen as being the first committee many a new landmark law, but also for "saving the country from being blacklisted" by the international community protecting the government's determination to go to war against "the Abu Sayyaf bandits and the rebels."

For her part, Climaco, who before her entry into politics had used their national politics was a teacher and broadcaster, mentioned the pressures being put on her to run for Mayor Lobregat's position in the Magna Carta. She is the author of one of the draft bills incorporated into a "substitute bill" now being heard by the House committee on women, chaired by Cebu Rep. Eduardo Gullas, and by Iloilo Rep. Jerry Trenas' Gullas's Batasan bloc.

BUT even as we shared information not only on the Magna Carta of Women but also on Gullas, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which required much of the Magna Carta, we learned a lot from the women of the province.

A Muslim participant brought up the "shah hemiyya academic policies and human rights based on ecology," involving Muslim marriage law, in a Catholic-run hospital who have been ordered to discard their birth-control concoctions while doing their rounds. The hospital administration stated concerns about "conscience" and "religious" objections, which were then overruled by the higher-ups. The participant declared, "The veil is a severing of the Muslim women, a symbol of their privacy and part, and to tell her to take it off is like telling her to take off her panties."

The dark Magna Carta provides for the rights and empowerment of marginalized women, including those in remote and conflict areas. Yet the strong unions and preservation of cultural identity "in purity" do certainly come forward, the Magna Carta would provide legal basis for a complaint by women subjected to such practices.

A person saying the sixth passage of the Magna Carta is being circulated, said Zamboanga councilors Lilia Nuno and Lynn Alonzo, who were also invited to the session, and calls for the strong unions and preservation of cultural identity "in purity" do certainly come forward, the Magna Carta would provide legal basis for a complaint by women subjected to such practices.

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EXCITED calling my Sunday morning was Manila Bulletin's front-page report of Bob Gordon's bounty," chasing the news that he'd been named to a hearing today of the House committee on public order and safety on HB 5286, which provides for the hotel you have to deliver a bill to legalize lethal weapons as substitute for the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies." The bill was filed by Davao Rep. Nye Edwards Hontiveros K. Jones.

In its explanatory note, the draft bill says that "despite moves to have all guns registered and legalized the use of firearms, there are still countless incidents of violence and improper use of unlicensed weapons. Many times, it is for lack of law [on ... because of the lack of a truly effective system to the issuance and use of guns and firearms."

Jones declares that "the cases call for a re-examination of our laws on the ownership, possession and use of guns and firearms. In other countries and states, there is a move towards the use of non-lethal weapons to keep peace and order. In keeping with the constitutional policy of peace and the occupation of the rule of law, there is a need for our nation to arm many from violence and inconsistencies which propagate violence. This bill seeks to augment the police force and assist in promote the use of non-lethal weapons in the national law enforcement."

A "TOTAL Gun Ban" is defined in the bill as "the absolute prohibition on the use, ownership and/or possession of deadly weapons such as, but not limited to, firearms, rifles, bombs, explosive devices, chemical weapons or [any] guns or other similar devices which are made or used to kill a person."

Jones's bill provides for a "phased implementation" of the gun ban, over three years, providing for public information campaigns, destruction and stockpiles and weapons drives before the ban is implemented. Supporters of the "Gentlers Society" bills over the years, however, have argued that a public campaign that only law enforcers or duly-armed individuals will be allowed to carry "lethal weapons" during the transition is the use of "non-lethal weapons" by police and military.

Partners, after spa hotels, is continued about an unexpected emergency on the "gun ban." Still, he would like you'll always in mind that, despite popular support, the "Gentlers Society" bill has had a long, frustrating history in the legislature and by gun-loving, if not gun-crazy, members.

'2010, or earlier'

John Nery

THE ISSUE IS ACCOUNTABILITY: THE ALLEGAtions of abuse of power and large-scale corruption not credible; the processes to vet them, to try to investigate them for the Arroyo administration, should be, not.

But despite new spokesmen and a return to campaign-style governance by stroke that would lend, because of the absence of the prayer and campaign and deliberately shallow, spokesmen), the administration is doing all it can to defer the reckoning.

The administration of Joe Lozada is the paradigm in this respect—since Gloria acted it. It is the response, the exemplary episode, that makes sense of the parade of parables we face. It is through this lens, therefore, that we should view the Senate investigation of the ZTE deal.

Here if we were to consider Lozada's offensive tips from the airport as formally called them his title, we would still have to consider the episode in the light of the Senate investigation—the fact that PRE is an open authority—cooperated (or tolerated) as previous Lozada from being arrested by agents of the Senate only as all we need to know is that the Senate investigation is not a criminal charge, or rather privileged vice presidents, so with the Senate blue ribbon committee hearings. The administration does not have to do anything.

What is the reason in this President's designated Arroyo and politicians called him here from the senate in running the country. It is really quite as simple as that. The basic principle has remained democratic elections has not changed. "Those who have the votes rule." There is, true, a deadline for electing them out: June 30, 2010.

The strategic value of the 2010 elections lies in their deadline: a number of powers is already under the control of the administration, and the opposition hopes that the July 16, 2010 census, that more any installation or postponement of the elections, may change a misadornment people's mandate will be secured. No Filipino politician, no matter how ambitious, wants to wait for the next opposite the Filipino's passion for the vote. So let the Senate hawk more Tulfo products, or Hacker Villar stir more provisions, or Dick Gordon play any with Cebu's Gwen Garcia—their ambitions are always delayed.

At the same time, the same goes even the official impunity and immediate one period revealed by the MPD is entitled more common to be registered. Even if people power were successful in the end, they would still take to the streets, fill up the churches, organize school lessons, include the public square.

It's possible that such "sustained action," to use Cardinal Sin's phrase, will be necessary. It may provoke possibilities of events that could lead to an earlier date of reckoning for the Arroyo administration. Well and good. Perhaps he's open to suggestions. I'm open to them, either. What is it? The impotent things to do for you.

Before Senate Subpoena is in Peace of 2007 school Lozada and former President Cesáreo Aquino and Mr. Lozada's wife Jocelyn Lozada, Mr. Lozada's testimony has handed to consider the Dept with to ensure integrity, to government. "the first way to see through a conduct of leaders who are forcibly removed through people power, has through to enforcement, and to ensure that the rule of law prevails." We have 20 criminals before the next election. We have enough time to prepare candidates to run our voters' list to our people power during the 2010 elections. Let's get to work.

As in 2007, the national elections in 2010 are the opportunities for us. Let's have the opinions for people power does not just one or be a last destination.

Newsstand

While waiting to appear on "Kontra Today" last Friday, the time of or who had been invited as to answer questions on the issue of the ZTE mobile telecom deal, became Noli Ado executive director Ma Gloria Tabunda was with us, discussed her thesis issue Gloria Manila) survey.

What's explained: Ian asks "Gordon, credibility? she was asked. It's his demeanor, the said, and his ability to answer all manner of questions. His survey was better title.

Mr. interviewer: The "Gordon survey" must have also added to the credibility of Lozada's story. Granted the circumstances, like going missing, Lozada's sudden movie middle of the night, surrounded by a bodyguard of men, Silliman a doubt, the presence of the religious as a seal of approval.

Bill Luz, formerly and formerly of the Makati Business Club and now AVP of Ayala Foundation, and I've formed "advocacy" group to do the work of an opinion in a Creative Could mobilization Bureau but stroll, organize thematic interventions to create stories in the public on its advertising campaign. In a nutshell, Luz said, the Cardinal supports the massive lobbying up a sign that, notwithstanding, assisted up the workshop's objective. "Gloria's Dole," the interview with some opposed.

If you support the Cardinal's public-service advertising can be understood from such, we have an interior guide to work, so!

Make Consumer Cable president Kirsten Jayme of BMG Jayme Syjuco, the session produced of judges for the Inquirer Young Blood Service, recognized the work of Jonathan Bongay and Glyzy Quaquero from J. Romero as the best of the year. they will represent the Philippines in Contact Players Tomorrow, and Jessica Zafra received Isidro Pandagal from Carter Inc. will represent the country as the Aubrey in Pattaya, Thailand.

The next conception campaign, a class in the history of the guild, is sponsored by the Ayala Foundation.

Email: jnery@inquirer.com.ph

Inside a police station

I HAD ONE OF THE "MOST MORBIDITY" OF MY LIFE A FEW days ago. I had to go to a police station (somewhere along Espana Avenue) to file a complaint. I already anticipated that they would ask me to return all the details on the incident, so I brought with me a box of tissue paper as they are many cases for prosecution, my identification card and a medical report from the Quirino Hospitals.

The police station was quite crowded. It had a TV set on a place to be tuned to land, a long table, phone chairs, so with a room for the station commander, a desk, electric fan, a small lavatory, a map of Metro Manila police stations and their jurisdictions, a picture of GMA, a poster of the Philippines' most wanted fugitives, newspapers, and the organizational chart of the Philippine National Police written on the dirty white wall. It was like scenes from an ABS-CBN movie.

On top of the table was a big sad book with "POLICE BLOTTER" in big, bold letters written on its cover. I noticed that the book was thick and worn, which means many cases were filled with reports. I thought I must be lucky to be among the first to report an incident for the year. But alas!

I cannot name names because I did not take down the names of the police men on duty. By breakfast found an indifference on many, and my eyes were filled with tears. But I can remember only the police officer who took my report.

Police Office No. 1 asked me, "Ci ano bang nangyari?" I said, "Magnakaw ako ng police, sir."

Truthfully, I began recounting what happened. It was not easy to remember all the ugly things that happened and all the bad words that were said. When I was finished, I was really exasperated and willing to again and again was painful. It felt like drowning yourself in the polluted Manila Bay or rushing over there with all my pride or putting bruises on my deeply wounded heart.

I hadn't finished my narration when the policeman suddenly cut me off, saying, "Miss, ayaw na ang dun. Ito ikaw ng ibang tao ha? Ito ang mga dapat mong gawin."

I listened to carefully and wrote the police blotter at last, but I managed to get hold of myself. I reminded myself that I was there to report an incident (the more accurate term is "crime") inflicted to be detained in their cramped jail space or with complaints and cries.

There were three policemen on the area desk. Police Officer No. 2 sat in front of the table. He looked for typos and it took him about five minutes to analyze the police blotter before me. He asked me if everything was okay.

Police No. 1 said to me in front of me and began asking questions. "What could you did it happen? Who did it to me? What was my relationship with the person involved? Were there other people around? What was I doing in that place? Did anyone help me? How was I feeling? Did it hurt? What did I want to happen next?

After all questions, both necessary and not, had been asked, they told me that the place where the incident happened was not in her area of jurisdiction. So they had to forward my case to another police station or proper disposal. I had the option to go to other police station myself and report to the desk officer.

The only part of the interview centered of their personal thoughts on the incident. Apparently I am taking policemen, psychiatrists, and I got a heavy dose of amateur psychiatrists.

For it, they told me what happened was partly my mistake. I told them, binuwag ang mga pangyayari sa paulit-ulit. Daily are memories, memories and unpleasant parties would of the.

Second, they said I could file cases of grave threats, causing physical injuries, illegal detention and theft. But that was exactly what I was there for.

Third, they told me I could make a base amount of money if I filed a civil case. I can get from P80,000 to P100,000, according to their calculations. Well, I did not need her kind of money. I was after justice, not money.

Fourth, they suggested that I sit down with the person who had done me wrong and try to settle everything. That was something I could not do. At the moment I was still struggling with fear, resentment and insecurity.

Fifth, they asked if I have any evidence to support my complaint. I knew I needed to support my statements, so I came armed with physical evidence. I showed them the medical report and the torn shirt.

They smiled and said I had strong evidence, but still suggested that I go for a settlement, for the "fairness" advantage and leave him full of fear and God knows what. They actually ridiculed my settle-the-case. Was this upheld of them?

Why were these policemen supposed to send me the rest and discussing how much I might get? I'll tell you what I think.

First, they would get a percentage of the amount I would get. I would tell them their encouraging tone.

Second, they were too lazy to do their task.

Third, they had so many cases to handle every day of their lives it is hard for me to listen to the Mr. I for song on the radio.

But if these police men can show so much indifference to ordinary person, what chance has the average citizen? Justice is apparently only for those who are rich and have the right rights. Now I understand why many people prefer to keep quiet instead of going to the authorities, which their complaints. Now I understand why some people take justice into their own hands: those who should help them are the ones who discourage them and keep justice away from them.

I wonder how many police men do not have the courage to stand up using the oath they took? How many people chose to keep quiet instead of going to the authorities, which their complaints. Now I understand why some people take justice into their own hands: those who should help them are the ones who discourage them and keep justice away from them.

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So what happened to the case I filed? It is on the blotter for reference. I don't know any lawyer who can take it pro bono, and because I am having financial difficulties, I am not ready to give. like the police officer suggested.

The police will never change. They will always treat victims as criminals and criminals as deeply injured. They have developed the habit of humiliating instead of helping those who come for their help.

Next time, I will take lessons from my lunch.

Oh, I apologize to those police men of the work honestly and who do their jobs faithfully and well. But to the rest I say: Shame on you!

Young Blood

Katrina Antonette Agudo

*We want to know what the young are thinking about. Write us your opinions on anything about. Write us your opinions on anything about. Write us your opinions on anything

Corruption is an attack on life

AS CO-CELEBRANTS OF LIFE, WE women deeply feel our people's anguished longing for a just and peaceful nation. From our wombs sent our inner beings we bring forth life and sacrifice ourselves for life and commit ourselves to its defense, preservation, propagation.

God ignores in a contradiction to women's life-giving capacity. It wonders why women, by reason of equal sharing and just management of God's resources and blessings. Corruption in government is not only abuse of power, it is plunder.

Time the anomalous 1000-2:1 ideal loan officer to the survivalists of life. Children are dying, of hunger and hopelessness—like the hungry 7-year-old girl in Payatas, who was waiting for her turn to receive her share in a school feeding program, and the 12-year-old girl who committed suicide because her family could no longer provide for her school needs. Yet, public "servants," ensnared by greed and selfishness, shamelessly raid government coffers with abandon.

At moment of truth, we ask: "How can our leaders be so ruthless, numb and heartless before the majority of our people are suffering from excessive poverty and misery?"

Had it not been for the anonymous community of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada, the Philippine people would be paying for one more specious government malversation, while those responsible for the evil deed freely enjoy the fruits of their crimes. Lozada's exposé should encourage and inspire other government officials to advocate truth and fight resolutely against government graft.

We fully support Lozada and pray for his wife and children so that they can withstand the pressure and threats from the enemies of truth. We are one with Lozada and his family in the search for truth, justice and accountability.

Silence, as life grows, life loses and life ourselves, will never surrender to any attempt to make corruption a "way of life" for public servants. The conscious of the nation should be aligned by the people and for the people alone. The public servant who, by his or her corrupt practices, shamelessly steals food from our children, deprives them of education and deforms shelter and remains their right to health, must be made accountable.

We call on our "leaders" to let the light of truth and justice prevail in our land. We also call on our sisters and brothers in the churches and in other institutions to keep alive our nation's passion for justice and truth.

—DARLENE MARQUEZ-CALAMAYAN,
executive secretary,
The United Methodist Church-Philippines General Conference
Board of Women's Work,
Room 208 FMC Building,
900 Central Bonifacio Avenue,
Ermita, Manila, 1000

Parañaque policemen harassing transport federation

WE WRITE ON BEHALF OF THE federation of women Operators and Drivers of Bacoor, Boroon, Imus, Parañaque City (Federated) represented by Ruben Dalanon.

It is about 1:00 a.m. on Feb. 2, 2008. Some policemen, in an obvious act of harassment, ordered officers of the federation to stop the peaceful and orderly operation of its passenger service terminal at the A. Soriano corner Bonifacio Extension, Barangay Don Bosco, Parañaque City. We refer here to the court, Metropolitan Trial Development Authority (MMDA), Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) or Land Transportation Office (LTO) was presented. All that we always wear a shirt issue from Teodoro C. Vitaro Jr., barangay chair of Barangay Don Bosco, stating that the terminal was "illegal" and "causing traffic congestion along Doña Soledad Avenue."

The policemen came from Police Community Precinct (PCP)-3, which is located on Doña Soledad Avenue. Therefore, their accusation is baseless. Private Enrique F. Sic must have known very well that the terminal was not causing "traffic congestion." Truth to tell, the terminal's well operated management of picking up and discharging passengers within the terminal which, in return, it holds a private property and not on Doña Soledad Avenue, prevents traffic congestion in the area.

It appears that the police should look back, fast and slider Hitmen's emerging and baseless, narrowest that the terminal was "illegal."

It is the primary duty of law enforcers, before they proceed to take any police action, to first verify the alleged illegal activity. Did they investigate if the terminal was indeed illegal? They didn't. Upon the order of their commanders, the policemen arrogantly ordered the representatives of the federation to immediately stop the operation of the terminal.

We would like the police to know that the federation has the franchise and operation permits from the MMDA, LTFRB and LTO to operate the terminal. Local government units, particularly the barangay have no authority to recall the permits granted by these national government agencies to the federation. I do not see any provision in the Local Government Code (RA No. 7160, as amended) authorizing barangay chairs to do this.

It is, therefore, our appreciation that the conduct of the police from PCP-3 was unwise to harass the federation and its members. In blind obedience to the order of a bossy, gay officer who is out to seek revenge against a political foe.

Policemen are protectors of the people, not soldiers of politicians. May we, therefore, urge police to operate by and by mayor who do not from further harassing the federation, otherwise we shall be compelled to seek judicial (criminal and civil) and administrative relief and invoke the full force of law.

—REYES, REY,
233 Salcedo St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City

LETTERS

Young idealists led oust-JDV bid

YOUR COLUMNIST BELINDA Olivares-Cuneta was right when, she wrote, quoting Rep. Bobo Golez of Parañaque, that former Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. was a "political giant" and his ouster should certainly be "economic" and cause massive readjustments in the House of Representatives. (Inquirer, 2/5/08) She said Golez was correct, and that the administration had no way of positioning itself in the realignments in the House would be.

There's no question about that. Cuneta failed to note that the House members who voted against De Venecia included former Cebu Rep. Gregorio Ingkiong as Speaker were led mostly by a group of idealist neophytes—including myself and third termers, all of them still relatively young—who wanted reforms in the House.

The neophytes didn't want De Venecia anymore because he was everything that they wanted to discard—the image of traditional politics of patronage politics. The last three years of term—including their elections, if not their own families—vowed De Venecia something from the past and served against him a grade emotional cost based many grave votes to their belief, more than their personal interests.

It's too early to call if De Venecia's ouster would lead the administration apart, as the ouster was not an overly vocal of Speaker Arroyo can't deliver the reforms he wrong House members have long wanted.

We simply have to support the young representatives for their decision to put their votes least in Congress in the same way that we support Congress for her right to write about her own views.

—HEYDER ARON
H. SEGUERRA,
president,
137 Central Student Council,
villarosa.reyner@gmail.com

Build libraries, not waiting sheds

THE REPORT TO THE CDRRMC summary "Let me count the ways ... reading tips" by Neal Sto. Tomas (Feb. 19/2008, U Tech) A very interesting column, with a subject that I had been thinking about for the last few months.

We all feel bad about the Philippines having been left behind by our Asian neighbors, but this is not anything to sit, considering the lack of support for initiatives made in the area of education and technology.

When the biggest concern of the time is "Pedo and Gawi" rather than classroom shortage, lack of libraries and other professionals like engineers and scientists, and the increasing number of overseas Filipino workers, then we should wonder what kind of nation we have become.

For someone who claims to have an economics degree, President Macapagal-Arroyo seems not to know the basic determinants of economic growth. And it is sad that the country's lawmakers are more concerned with increasing their pork barrel, most of which only goes into their pockets anyway. And when they do not the money "for the benefit of the people," they use it to put up basketball courts, waiting sheds and roads to non-productive projects like billboards with their names and faces on them.

Why not build libraries instead? Into just school libraries that only students can use; two public libraries where everybody, young and old, rich and poor, can enrich their minds with new knowledge instead of the latest

GMA resign? An impossible dream

THE IRONY IN RESPONSE TO THE letter sent by much frontier, requesting Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to resign the presidency (see of Belvedere Document, 2/15/08) Belvedere is asking—be most impossible thing from GMA.

First, she doesn't have dedication. Second, she's totally determined to stay as President till morning if we allow her. Third, there is still enough money to refunds as fraudulent. Remember, she said her cabal are too yes people, where children and teenagers are spend their time reading books instead of just playing basketball and "developing" themselves into "useless" (Name).

Shouldn't we be building a nation of intelligent and productive human beings? Are only will I become help rebuilding a nation of readers, it can also be a center for watching computer skills and for networking the Internet.

Instead of complaining about everybody studying nursing and going abroad, shouldn't we increase the education budget and give scholarship to those who want to be doctors, scientists or engineers? And even if these scholars should choose to go abroad, wouldn't they be more productive and better paid and therefore provide more for their families?

Book lovers, with a worldview broad enough to know the challenges of globalization, there will be less need for Filipinos to work abroad in pursuit of a better future.

Instead of worrying how we are losing jobs to China, we should be more excited that we can now develop our workforce to become pacing and more profitable endeavors like call centers, software or game design, medical tourism, biotech and agriculture, to name a few.

Let's leave the low-paying jobs to countries like China and India. Let's educate our people so they can help themselves instead of losing concern with being a nation of mendicants.

—JEREMY REYES,
jbbar@gmail.com

9 GMA hecklers arrested

From page A1

backs in the aborted EDSA rally, but National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp.

Only reporters said Mr. Arroyo actually broke when the heckling started and then turned to find out what the commotion was all about.

The Associated Press, quoting local television, said Mr. Arroyo's voice briefly strained but regained her composure when city officials applauded.

Carlos incident

It was the second time in recent days that Mr. Arroyo was heckled at a public function.

In April 2006, Mass Communications graduate Maria Theresa Pangilinan shouted "*Mabuhay si Gloria (Gloria Labandera)*" during a speech at the University of the Cordilleras.

Pangilinan had shouted the slogan while holding up a red banner with the words "Yes to Cha-cha!" (Charter change) while Mr. Arroyo was speaking.

Presidential guards immediately confiscated Pangilinan's banner.

Hecklers availed, defended

Commission on Human Rights Commissioner Elaga Mellini said the Calendar protesters had exercised Mr. Arroyo's right, saying: "The President also has her rights to freedom of expression. What they did was availed for under the circumstances."

Mellini said there was always a proper forum for such kind of protest.

"The hecklers were merely expressing their sentiments against GMA. They must be released unconditionally," Rep. Teodoro Casiño of the militant Bayan Muna party-list group said.

Heraldito C. Glariel and Mr. Arroyo, *Robertito* in Mano! (Puppet, Bicol, Scourge of the Masses)," the protestors reportedly shouted before Mr. Arroyo was to address a crowd of about 300 people from a stage in front of the Colombo City Hall.

Some of the protestors claimed the police roughed them up.

Witnesses said the protestors ran from chairs to double Mr. Arroyo when she stood at the front of the stage to lead the nationalistic refrain of pink balloons marking the program with the theme "Galaw ng Bayan, Inspirasyon ng Kabataan."

Heckling not heard

Mr. Arroyo had also gone to Colombo to inaugurate two newly reconstructed and rehabilitated bridges in Barangays Pitogo and Looc San Juan.

President and Security Group (PSG) chief Brig. Gen. Nestor Pecaoco said he did not think Mr. Arroyo heard the hecklers because of the din at that time but expressions of concern over the siege behavior still fled.

The PSG said the security of Mr. Arroyo was not compromised.

The PSG chief said there it was impossible for the presidential detail (D) team to detect hecklers from a crowd, especially in a very public place.

Some witnesses said they saw presidential guards moving to surround the hecklers, but Presidential Security Group (PSG) chief Brig. Gen. Nestor Pecaoco denied that PSG men were involved in the arrests.

Three students

Authorities said three of those arrested were students. Some were purportedly members of people like Bayan Muna, the Bohemian party list, and Akbayan.

Media people, including photographers, were policemen officer the protestors with batons.

Dan Sevilla recounted at the journey.

Chief Supt. Ricardo Pulido, police director of Calabarzon, denied the hecklers were manhandled.

Pulido said what the hecklers did was improper because they were not in a rally or a demonstration.

The incident though did not stop Mr. Arroyo from distributing livelihood checks, as well as tool kits and scholarship vouchers from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, to local beneficiaries.

The Cadaw way

In her remarks, Mr. Arroyo spoke about how the government and the private sector are supporting the Cadaw and that many women now had livelihood.

She said that the United Nations honored the Philippines last year for being on top of only to consider on this flight against domestic violence of women.

"We are focusing on, pursuing the economy because this is the only path for the people to be able to get out from poverty," she said in Filipino.

Mr. Arroyo said that Cadaw "is truly a gem. I am thinking" was the way to fight poverty.

With reports from Jocelyn Cy and Norman Bordadora

16% of Metro folk willing to join rallies vs NBN deal

From page A1

ment said to demand the truth about the NBN deal.

Senate witnesses have linked the President and her husband to alleged kickbacks from the $329-million NBN deal with China's ZTE Corp.

Sixty-one percent of those polled by Pulse Asia thought there was a big possibility that the Senate testimony of Rodolfo Lozada Jr. would lead to calls for the downfall of the Arroyo administration.

The sentiment is more pronounced among members of class ABC (72 percent) than among members of class D and E (52 and 56 percent, respectively).

Eight percent think there is a small to no possibility of this happening, while 30 percent are undecided on the matter.

Pulse Asia conducted field interviews of 300 Metro Manila adults from Feb. 16 to 24. A nationwide survey has a margin of error of plus or minus six percentage points and a confidence level of 95 percent.

Of the respondents, 64 percent of Metro Manila adults are willing to attend mass actions, whether they support the reasons behind them (33 percent) or not (31 percent).

The top reason given by those who said they would not join, according to Pulse Asia's Ana Maria Tabunda, is fear. She says: "There are more important things to do" (16 percent) and "There's really no change whatever leads the government" (16 percent).

Need to earn money

Twenty-one percent said the need to earn money for daily expenses prevented them from attending rallies. This is a bigger concern for those belonging to lower social classes D and E (26 and 27 percent of them gave this reason), than for members of class ABC (16 percent).

Seven percent said they would join protests only if presented with a good alternative leader.

Six percent said they were tired of people power, and another 6 percent preferred to wait for the 2010 presidential election.

Three percent said those pushing for President Macapagal-Arroyo's replacement should be credible.

Unwillingness to support and join demonstrations is more pronounced among members of class E (44 percent). In contrast, willingness is more pronounced among those belonging to class ABC (32 percent), according to Pulse Asia.

'Hello Garci' aftermath

Tabunda noted that this percentage of Metro Manila adults willing to join rallies is lower than the 2005 figure registered in the July 2005 Pulse Asia survey conducted during the aftermath of the "Hello Garci" controversy.

"But we are seeing more pronounced signs. This might be because the President has admitted knowledge of alleged anomalies surrounding the NBN deal before she signed the contract," Tabunda said.

On June 27, 2005, the President admitted to the public for talking to an election official during the 2004 presidential election, but denied rigging election results.

Impeachment complaints filed against her have been pending in her allies in the House of Representatives.

Aurora not solid for GMA

Outside Metro Manila, people are marching against corruption in government.

Some 400 leaders of church-, nongovernment organizations and people's organizations in Aurora marched in the capital Aurora of Baler on March 1 to dispute claims he faced official support in the province was officer for his defense.

Aurora is no GMA country. During the march, we announced the systemic graft and corruption by the national and local governments," said Fr. Jerard Gabriel, secretary general of the Diocesan Social Action Center of the Vicariate of the Welfare of the Fishermen of Infanta, and Alfonso Ver Zal, secretary of the Multi-Sectoral Action Groups, in a statement e-mailed to the Inquirer on Monday.

The claims that Aurora is pro-Arroyo came mostly from leaders, it was learned.

The program, held at the Quezon Park, started with a Mass commemorating the "freedom heroes and martyrs" in the province, including Jun Encinas, a victim of forced disappearance two years ago.

Besides a mall members of the Bayan Samarina Centro and MUKO secretary, was "kidnapped by militant men" in Baler, Dec. 31.

Gabriel said Ver Zal reported that during his ordeal, members of the Basic Christian Communities, people's organizations and NGOs signed a petition vowing to do communal actions against the rampant graft and corruption" and "for truth in the truth, justice and peace."

The petition, called Lozada's request on the anomalies in the national NBN deal as "obstructing and spurning."

Not relying on bishops

In Baguio City, Sen. Francis Escudero said the opposition was not relying much on the action of the Catholic bishops or the military in pushing calls for life Arroyo's resignation.

"I don't think we have will it take for the Church to take an active position in fighting for the love interest not only of Catholics but [of all] Filipinos as well," Escudero said.

"We cannot pin our hopes on the military and we cannot be passive. We expect them. They are an important segment but if our sent, we might be waiting for nothing," Adel Tamano, spokesperson of the United Opposition, said reporters in Baguio on Saturday.

Tamano said despite the absence of the bishops and military officials in mass actions, more protest rallies would be staged in Metro Manila and in the provinces to push the call for truth and accountability.

Pastoral letters

On Sunday, pastoral letters were read and homilies were given at Masses in Batanes and Cagayan de Oro condemning graft in the corruption issues facing the Arroyo administration.

In Batanes, Bishop Bishop Jesmundo Villegas urged residents to join mass actions and political rallies through a "powerful manifestation of people power."

In a pastoral statement read in Masses in Batanes on Sunday, Villegas asked people to stop playing blind to corruption in government.

"We should speak up because the public is suffering what is happening silently. We are getting used to the easy of lies," he said.

But Villegas also assailed some members of the opposition, who he said were having designs of replacing Mrs. Arroyo with their own set of leaders.

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"The enemies are salivating while waiting for their chance to sit public office—you're the instrument in front of us of office," he said.

He said all mass actions should be geared toward removing hatred and clean living.

In Cagayan, homilies given by priests on Sunday explained the pastoral statements of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines amid the corruption scandals involving the Arroyo administration.

Condemn culture of corruption

The priests urged Cagayanos to condemn the culture of corruption and to ask all government officials to take the lead in fighting corruption at all levels.

In Calabanga City, Zambales parish Fr. Jay Dela Cruz said the holding of continuous protests would eventually force Mr. Arroyo to leave Malacañang.

Islam said the growing number of protesters would simply be difficult for Mr. Arroyo, who she described as "stubborn, to ignore anymore.

She said Philadelphia's downplaying of the protests was unusual but it would eventually pay off. "The same scenario happened during past ousted presidents," Islam said, referring to former Presidents Marcos and Estrada.

Troop loyalty

In Zamboanga City, Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon said that about 2 percent of the troops under his control are loyal to the President.

Speaking to reporters in Camp Navarro on Saturday, Alfaga said a majority of his soldiers want Malacañang Mr. Arroyo.

"I am not 100 percent (sure). Let's say 98 percent and trust the 2 percent is not sure," he said.

When he inquired asked if he did not consider the 2 percent significant in the case of Siwa case, Esperon said: "Even 40 percent soldiers and officers, Alfaga immediately backlashed. "If 100 percent then," he said.

A soldier who spoke to the reporters said he would understand the blind loyalty the generals were professing their support.

"The generals are not trying to protect their interests, but if they are (just) upset (about) losing to ordered personnel, they will surely find out that we are (already) discouraged," the soldier, who requested anonymity, said.

Gays, lesbians vs Ms Arroyo

A group of women, gay and lesbian have united going around villages in Cotabato City in an effort to drum up the campaign against corruption in government.

But to make the activity more than mere people, the group—composed of two lesbian women—has also been organized.

But Gabriela Network of Professionals (Gab-Net) chair Lyn Ilio Corrales said the rallies of the activities overall is for the lesbians, wherein the people could always ask questions.

"With the issues we are having today, women cannot just sit back and relax waiting for the update. Women wanted to get involved," she said.

Gab-Net Republic of Pro-gay said "gays and lesbians want to prove that we are responsible citizens of this country."

"We cannot be just plain spectators of this crisis," he said, citing the issue of the controversial $329-million NBN deal. Gab-Net reports from Rosalie Orejas and Greg Rabanales, Inquirer Central Luzon, and Darlyn Liban and Ramonilan Golden, Inquirer Southern Luzon; and Charlie Lachica, Sally Alipala and Fabaris Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, March 4, 2008
4th Week of Lent
Common

1st Reading: Feb 47, 1-8, 12
Gospel: Jn 5:1-3 R/ Lk 5:1-3, 5-10 I

Mike A trust rating sinks to negative 51

From page A1

ed Oct. 31 to Dec. 2, 2007, among 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

At least a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Scandals

Distrust in the President's husband was highest in Metro Manila (net -61), followed by the rest of Luzon (net -56), Mindanao (net -49), and the Visayas (net -34).

Distrust was highest among the ABC classes (net -65), compared with the lower classes D (net -49) and E (net -50).

The President's husband has been linked to several scandals, like the Jose Pidal account, the "Hello Garci" controversy, and, most recently, the alleged $329-million National Broadband Network deal.

Directly related

"Public confidence with President Macapagal-Arroyo's performance and public trust in the Two Constitutions are directly related to each other," Pulse Asia research director Ana Maria Tabunda said in a press conference.

Distrust was also higher among those who said they were dissatisfied with Mrs. Arroyo's performance (net -49) and those who said they were indifferent (net -50).

The distrust rating for Mrs. Arroyo received an average net score rating of -32 (33 percent "much trust" and 32 percent "little trust").

But the 3-point rating was positive only once, in January 2001, when he received a net trust rating of +14.

The 2005 surveys on the trust ratings of first spouses are never positive, and they've included on 2007 was indicative," the polling group said. Elisa Tabuena, Inquirer Research

Eternal Plans honors top sales performers

Eternal Plans, Inc., celebrated its 17th anniversary with the Grand Annual Awards Night at the Grand Ballroom of the Manila Hotel on February 23, 2008. Sales executives from branches nationwide are attending the celebration. Among awards top sales performers for 2007 shall be recognized. The following top performers in Cagayan de Oro received awards for their outstanding performance:

Eliseo M. Lozada, Eternal Plans President and Chief Operating Officer, said the company looks to top sales performers every year to recognize their performance and create guidelines so as sales teams to receive motivations to continuously do better.

"The sales executives were the unsung but very heroes, service recognition of their efforts and get to spend a vacation for free at chosen tourist destinations. For this year, it's Singapore and next year, it will be Kuala Lumpur," Lozada said.

Leading the honorees of the Grand Annual awards are Atanacio Ruth (top Sales Manager for regular sales), and Glaiza Bonagofon, for institutional sales. Ms. Bonagofon has been with the company since 1991 and holds the distinction of having delivered the biggest Sales Team Production in the history of Eternal Plans, Inc. Ruth joined Eternal Plans in 1993 and like Bonagofon in 1997. Bonagofon and Ruth are both graduates of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Liceo de Cagayan University. Ruth is the group's pride of honor and speaker. Her sweet testimony touched and broke the hearts of the audience to overcome from the trials that threw it to extreme pain.

In his message to Eternal Plans for the Grand Awards Night 2008, Davis said, "we sincerely hope that Eternal Plans will remain a dynamic participant in preserving and maintaining the growth and stability of the pre-need industry."

As the newest newcomer, Eternal Plans is expanding its service to the provinces. The company is also set to unveil new premium plan upon approved recently by the SEC.

Across the NATION

Gov't losing ₱4B yearly from car smuggling

By Iona R. Sino Cruz
Inquirer Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—UNABATED CAR smuggling is draining the government of more than P4 billion in revenue losses each year, according to Ford Group Philippines president Richard C. Baker.

Baker, in a press briefing on tonnelis, noted that the automotive industry estimated the income loss. "We did a simulation that if you add all that government taxes from import excise tax, VAT, Cedar added tax) as well as income taxes and corporate taxes from the industry, the revenue lost would be in billions," he said.

He also said car smuggling partly caused the slow growth of the domestic automotive market. Local sales only reached about 180,000 units during the pre-Asian Boats, 240,000 units.

While other Asian countries have surpassed their pre-crisis sales figures, Baker said sales in the Philippines reached only 117,000 units in 2007. "If you look at the other markets, the new vehicles purchased in Thailand has reached 600,000 and in Indonesia, almost 500,000," he said.

Even Vietnam has surpassed the Philippines in terms of new vehicles purchased, reaching 15,000 units in January alone compared to the Philippines' 8,000, Baker noted.

Car smuggling in Cebu has become rampant, he said. Dealers sold 5,000 new vehicles in Central Visayas, registrations reached 28,000, he said. "Something's wrong and a big part of that are smuggled cars. You travel around Cebu and it's right out there. You can see it in the open."

Baker warned that car smuggling had affected not only the new car industry but had also threatened the used car trade. Owners who would like to sell their cars would get a lower resale value because the market is saturated with the cheaper, smuggled models, he pointed out.

Baker identified the enforcement side as a source of the problem.

PULLOUT
An American soldier pulls a plane equipment at the Diosdado Macapagal Airport in Clark, Pampanga, as the joint RP-US military exercises kick off on Monday.
RON MEDINA

NIA warns Chinese firm over project delay

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—A GOVERNMENT agency has threatened to take over the P773-million repair project of the Bago River Irrigation System (BRIS) being undertaken by a Chinese firm because of continued delay.

The National Irrigation Authority has given China Wanxi and Hunan Corp. (CWEC) until May 15 to achieve two-week slippage.

NIA project manager Samuel Lagahaan said on Sunday the company had blamed the rains and a problem with its quarry permit for the negative eight-year-week slippage.

Lagahaan said the project, which was expected to be finished in March 2009, was 53-percent complete. Its completion date should have been 61 percent, he said.

The project involves the construction of a 1.5-kilometer canal in Murcia town and the repair of the 20-km main canal that traverses Murcia, Pulupandan, Bago City and San Enrique and the interval or small canals covering 180 km.

Lagahaan said CWEC had yet to pay its Filipino subcontractors P15 million. He said he had received more complaints from the company's subcontractors.

If the Chinese firm fails to address the slippage, the NIA will turn over the project to the subcontractors, he said.

CWEC has asked for an extension of six months to complete the project, citing unfavorable weather, Lagahaan said. "We have recommended that it only be granted a three-month extension."

Lagahaan said the Filipino could continue the repair but the government had to open the bidding to international companies, a requirement of the funding source Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

CWEC won the contract after it submitted the lowest bid of P 156 million.

The BRIS covers 12,737 hectares and will benefit 6,000 farmers in Murcia, Pulupandan, Valladolid and Don Salvador towns, and Bago and La Carlota cities.

Negros Occidental Rep. Jeffrey Fenrir said the delay would affect the farmers and the number of times they could plant rice in a year.

But farmers in Bago have threatened to stop paying irrigation fees because of the project delay.

NEWSBRIEFS

BARANGAY CITY

Summer jobs for Negros students

AT LEAST 1,000 students in the province will have jobs this summer under the Department of Labor and Employment's Special Program for the Employment of Students (SPES).

DOLE Dumaguete district head Jose Ogena said the national government had allotted P1 million for the program, in addition to what local governments and private establishments that asked to employ SPES beneficiaries for 20-40 days.

Ogena said the student workers with receive daily minimum wage (₱ percent of which will be paid by the employers and ₱ percent, by the DOLE.

Rosa Anatalio, Inquirer Visayas

CALAMBA CITY

4 teens killed, 8 hurt in Laguna accident

FOUR TEENAGERS died and eight others were injured when a Mitsubishi Adventure overturned in a concrete electric post along the national highway in Barangay Bucal, Sta. Rosa, Laguna, on Saturday night.

Laguna police director Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas said the dead and initially killed were Pogi Gatmaitan, 14; Christine Joy Abrazado, 16; Mico Silvano Kagat Jr., 13; and Jeanne Hernandez, 14.

"The car was really wrecked because of overspeeding. The driver was perhaps drunk," Rojas added.

Nika Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon

ILOILO CITY

Flood warning system in Iloilo

A KOREAN funding agency will set up a flood warning system in Iloilo.

Provincial administrator Manuel Mejaredy said the Korea International Cooperative Agency (KOICA)-assisted project, "Establishment of Early Warning System for Disaster Mitigation in the Philippines," would enable the province to have a reliable rainfall monitoring system.

Director Primo Hilo of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, who met Gov. Niel Tupas Sr. in a Feb. 19 letter that the equipment could be delivered this month. Hilo's deputy administrator is Mina Lim-Jonson. Calleng and Leo Rafael Varela.

Doris Isaac Dong, Inquirer Visayas

SOUTHERN LEYTE

New school for Guinsaugon

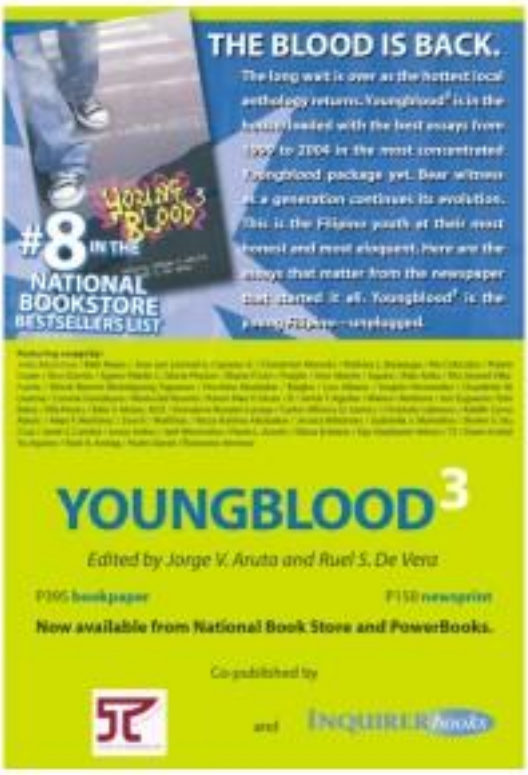
SURVIVORS of the Guinsaugon landslide in St. Bernard, Southern Leyte have received another new school facility of their relocation area.

The Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), corporate social responsibility arm of multinational and national companies, has built the three-classroom high school building in the relocation area and the Department of Education is scheduled to hold its classes in the school.

Children from executive director Teresita Villacorta and Development Bank of the Philippines assistant vice president Bernardito Olayvar handed out scholarship certificates to 13 elementary pupils.

The school building was the fifth for Guinsaugon has been under its project BLUE (Building Linkages, Understanding and Education), according to Thelma Paz of Citigroup Philippines.

Jun Aman, Inquirer Visayas



Typhoid fever sends 903 to hospitals in Laguna, says PNRC

CALAMBA CITY—A TOTAL of 903 people with typhoid fever have been admitted to different hospitals in the city by the last two weeks, the Philippine National Red Cross in Laguna reported.

But the PNRC explained that the Department of Health had yet to declare an outbreak of the disease.

Most hospitals started admitting typhoid patients on Feb. 18, said Rodolfo Cabrales, PNRC administrator in Laguna. The cases continued to increase as of Monday.

Cabrales said reports from the PNRC and the city health office were still awaiting the number of people affected. Some 2,000 people in Barangay Pansol were being observed, he added.

Most of the patients come from 18 barangays.

Cabrales said the PNRC and the city health office conducted an information drive to encourage people in the barangays on the symptoms of typhoid fever and how to prevent its spread.

"They are still investigating the cause of the suspected outbreak," she said.

Provincial Board Member Nell Sierra said in a phone interview that water contamination could have caused the illness.

With the increasing number of infantiles, the safety and cleanliness of water in the affected areas could no longer be given assurance, he said.

Sierra said he planned to assess the water situation in the second district with help from scientists and researchers from the University of the Philippines Los Baños. Arlie Catherine Calleja, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

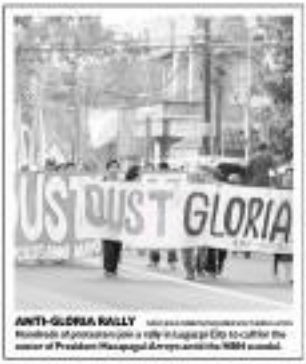
Miner killed in Diwata

TAGUM CITY—A MINER was killed while another was missing when a tunnel collapsed in the gold-rush area of Mt. Diwata in Monkayo, Compostela Valley, on Sunday, police said.

Supt. Ronaldo de la Rosa, Compostela Valley police director, said the cave-in occurred in Diwalwal village at around 7 p.m.

The two miners were working at the exploration area of the Balbor tunnel in Purok 2 when the tunnel collapsed, he said. They were considered contractual.

The officer said one body was recovered a few hours after the accident but efforts to locate the other miner had not succeeded as of 10 a.m. Primitivo Zita, *Inquirer Mindanao*



ANTI-GLORIA RALLY Hundreds of protesters join a rally in Lagaspi City to call for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo amid the NBN scandal.

Mine firm retreats after tribes clash

BAYABONG, SIGNA SIT, Cpra—A clash between opposing groups of indigenous peoples on Saturday has forced officials of an Australian mining company to backtrack from their attempt to renew a planned exploration site in upland Quirino town.

On Sunday, company workers said a group of pro-mining Bagkalan natives began pulling out from 16-a village to uproot what could be a violent confrontation with villagers opposing the entry of BayaGCo Resources Ltd.

Violence erupted when a group of about 100 armed-carrying residents belonging to the Kasibo Ibaot tribal Bagsiona for Ecological Development (Dired) clashed with a group of pro-mining Bagkalan.

Bagsiona Dired whose the pro-mining group tried to disperse Ibaot members who are on the path of a bulldozer that was clearing an access road for the company's exploration activities, according to Bernabe Abaoyd, a Bagkalan writer who visited the area.

A video footage taken by Abaoyd showed a number of men from opposite camps grappling in front of an advancing bulldozer along a downhill portions of the road in Brin Dipyan in Sitio.

The groups were later pacified. Policemen who were earlier deployed in the area intervened.

Jory Sribun Ayson, BayaGCo country manager, confirmed the problem. "We regret what happened, and we do not want the problem to worsen. So we have decided to pull out our people in the meantime that we are trying to find ways [to] remedy the problem," he said on Monday.

Ayson said he had ordered the removal of drilling tools that had been brought to the area, as well as the withdrawal of about 300 Bagkalan and Ibaga natives, who, he said, were hired "not as goons but as guards."

Tension began to build up in the area in January when Ibaot members camped out near the entrance to the exploration site to block company personnel who would conduct drilling activities.

BayaGCo brought in its own force of Bagkalan natives, whose leaders issued a statement assuring the company to explore within the 5,781-hectare area in the-s and Kalakgaya villages. The site is within a declared ancestral land of the Bagkalan.

Police confirmed reports that some members of these groups were armed, prompting the deployment of 75 policemen there as a peacekeeping contingent.

Dired members, composed of Kalangaya, Ibaloi and Bagkalan natives from six villages in Kasibo, have been protesting the government issuance of six exploration permits to BayaGCo, allegedly without consulting them.

It was the second successful blockade that Dired staged against BayaGCo, formerly known as Oriana Philippines Inc., In August 2007, about 1,000 Dired members put up a barricade to deny entry of mining equipment in Paspet.

Melvin Ignacio, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Divers help reduce starfish threat to reefs

By Marino Alexander Lutero
Inquirer Southern Luzon

MAMBURAO, MINDORO—CORAL REEFS off this town have been spared, albeit temporarily, from yet another ecological threat by the predatory Crown of Thorns starfish (COTS), thanks to round-up operations by a group of divers.

At least 40 volunteer divers, boatmen, Barangay Dogot members and municipal officials joined the 8th 4 activity organized by the Mabini Tourism Office. The campaign aims to reduce and control COT outbreak or infestation in the dive sites.

"Crowns of Thorns are eating the corals, which are the ones being visited by divers," said Mabini administrative officer Omar Evangelista.

Mabini, a third-class municipality (annual income: P30 million-P40 million) has 35 dive spots that offer coral reefs as main attraction. It has 19 coastal villages and 44 more, by dive resorts, which often employ residents.

At least 700 divers arrive weekly to see the reefs, according to tourism officer Mabelle Magsinlar.

Marine sanctuaries

The volunteer divers swept two sanctuaries, such as dolfino's Rock, Eagle Point, Reefs and Cathedral in Barangay Balingik, and retrieved at least 18 sacks of COTS. They used tongs to hold the usually poisonous starfish and brought them to the beach where they would rot.

Crowns of Thorns adults have 16-18 arms with poisonous spines, said the Mabini Tourism Office. They feed on the coral species Acropora and their polyps.

Mabini is part of the Verde Island Passage, home to at least 1,758 marine species—the largest in terms of density in the world.

Evangelista said the level of COT infestation "has not reached an alarming stage." When it does, "we would no longer see alive corals in the area," he said.

Diving industry

Since the starfish lay millions of eggs and could reproduce, Evangelista said it would be proper to "prevent them from growing this early."

The COTs damage the corals and not only kill the entire reef but Mabini's diving industry as well, he said. A single starfish can consume six meters of healthy reef yearly and a serious infestation can ruin resort businesses of coral reef in weeks, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature.

It takes 20 to 30 years for a coral to grow, dive shop owner and instructor Elke Quinto said.

Last year, the WWF reported COT infestations in the reefs of Malalison Reef and Puerto Galera in Mindoro; Nasan in Palawan; Bolinao in Lingayen Gulf, and many other coastal areas in the Philippines.

Department of Health

Philippine Glaucoma Society

Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology

WORLD GLAUCOMA DAY

March 6, 2008

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LUZON: Mariano Marcos Medical Center, Batac, Ilocos Norte; Lua Eye Clinic, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte; Northwestern Eye Center, Tuguegarao, Cagayan; Bernardo Eye Clinic, Dagupan City, Pangasinan; Dagupan Doctors Medical Center, Dagupan City, Pangasinan; Dagupan Eye Specialists, Dagupan City, Pangasinan; Tarlac Provincial Hospital, Tarlac, Tarlac; Santos Eye Clinic, Malolos City, Bulacan; De La Salle University Medical Center, Dasmarinas, Cavite; Imus EENT Hospital, Imus, Cavite; Calamba Eye Center, Crossing Calamba, Laguna; Modesto Hall, Tanauan City, Batangas; CF Reyes Hospital, Tanauan City, Batangas; Daniel Mercado Medical Center, Tanauan, Batangas; Legaspi Eye Center, Albay

VISAYAS: Western Visayas Medical Center, Mandurriao, Iloilo City; Riverside Medical Center, Bacolod City; ACES Eye Referral Clinics, Cebu; Cebu Doctors University Hospital, Cebu City; Bohol Eye and Ear Center, Tagbilaran City, Bohol; Ramiro Community Hospital, Tagbilaran City, Bohol

MINDANAO: ZAEC Community Medical Center, Zamboanga City; Davao Doctors Hospital, Davao; Davao Medical Center, Davao; Sabal Hospital, Cagayan de Oro; Northern Mindanao Medical Center, Cagayan de Oro; Polymedic General Hospital, Cagayan de Oro; Cagayan de Oro Medical Center, Cagayan De Oro; Maria Reyna Hospital, Cagayan de Oro; Madonna & Child Hospital, Cagayan de Oro; MJ Hospital, Montilla Blvd, Butuan City

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DANGER LURKS! Children play beside a busy street in Manila, unmindful of the dangers posed by passing vehicles. >>>

QC policeman files complaint vs boss

'Jueteng' collector's arrest started it all

By Marlon Ramos

AN OPERATIVE OF THE QUEZON CITY POLICE District yesterday filed a complaint against his superior whom he accused of taking his service firearm right after he arrested a suspected "jueteng" cabo (bet collector) on Sunday.

SPO1 Armando Rivera, 42, of the QCPD Station 9, lodged a complaint in the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit office at Camp Karingal, Diliman, Quezon City, against his station commander, Supt. Dexter Palmes.

Rivera said he supposedly earned the ire of Palmes after he and his two colleagues arrested and filed charges against Orlando Bolinao.

In his statement to the QCPD-CIDU, Rivera said he and the two policemen were on routine patrol when they spotted Bolinao collecting bets for jueteng, an illegal numbers game, from several persons at the corner of Kamputan and E. main streets in Barangay Paraiso at 7:20 a.m. Sunday.

After investigating and filing charges against the suspect, Rivera said they detained the suspect in the QCPD station 9 jail.

But moments later, the policeman said he received a radio message from Palmes directing him and the two other policemen to immediately report to his office.

Disarmed

He added that when he arrived at the station, Palmes disarmed him of his .45-cal. duty service weapon and also ordered yelling threats at him.

"You're already committed so many offenses against me. Something might happen to you. I just don't know what that might be," Palmes supposedly told him.

"Wala nang yon, did the right thing by arresting him. If not, I'll sue you," the official allegedly told the complainant.

Rivera said he was shocked by Palmes's reaction and stressed that Palmes' arrest was taken lightly.

Contacted by the Inquirer, Palmes denied Rivera's claim that he got mad over the arrest of the jueteng bet collector.

Angry

He explained that he was angry because he learned that Rivera and the policemen held Bolinao for almost four hours before turning him over to the police station.

"Why did they do that? Maybe they were planning something else," Palmes said.

He said Rivera, whom he described as a "police scalawag," had wanted to destroy his reputation ever since he took over the helm of the station in January 2007.

In fact, Rivera and his cohorts had been involved in a similar case before, Palmes claimed.

Korean fined for using unauthorized license plate

By DJ Yap

A "SIBOL 2010" LICENSE PLATE OR SO he can find out was a Korean national any more from Makati City's traffic enforcers who arrested him last week and slapped him with a stiff fine.

Jeong Han-goo, 32, a resident of Pasadena, City, was flagged down by members of Makati's Department of Public Safety for using the license plate despite previous warnings that these were unauthorized, City officials said.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay earlier disclosed his pledge of the license plates signifying as his inclusion in the list of prospective candidates for the presidential election in 2010.

Although he has expressed interest in joining the electoral race, Binay has not officially declared his political plans.

In a statement, DPS chief Hermogenildo San Miguel said the Korean was caught by traffic enforcers as he was driving on EE Fuyon Avenue.

After pretending, Han-goo later released and paid a fine of P2,500. The license plate was also confiscated, San Miguel added.

Upon questioning, the Korean told the enforcers he paid P12,000 for the license plate which he said he bought from a dealer in Quezon City. He, however, did not identify the dealer, San Miguel said.

The DPS reported the incident to the city police for further investigation.

"It is clear that the intention is to sell these car plates to the public with the false guarantee that the car owners would be given preferential treatment in the 2010 Binay said. "That is simply not true."

DID YOU KNOW

AVIÑA A man recognized in 1911, the Manila Hotel on Pedro Burgos Avenue was the biggest hotel in the country, standing six full stories higher than 150 meters by 100 meters. It held the distinction for more than half a century.

Some of Manila Hotel's rooms served as residences for American officials, including Maj. Dwight Eisenhower, aide-de-camp of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Eisenhower would later become president of the United States.

DJ Y.L. Bonifacio, Inquirer Research

Pasig bar raided for nude show

By Kristine L. Alave

ACTING ON A TIP, THE PASIG City police raided an Sunday night a beer joint that allegedly showed nude women dancing on stage, but failed to arrest the owner.

Instead, they picked up 12 of the establishment's workers and charged one of them with indecency.

A report from the PNP Public Information Office in Camp Crame said the police raided the JMC 130 Karaoke Bar on Shaw Boulevard in Barangay San Joaquin was initiated after the City Hall police department received a report that the office of Mayor Robert Young, his aide Ding Bautista and other officials were allegedly being harassed by a group of women who were performing nude dances in the bar.

Upon receiving the complaint, the police immediately sent three men to the bar on Sunday night to verify the information. One of them later took part in one of the women dancing naked on the stage, Senior Supt. Leocadio Santiago Jr., Eastern Police District director, said in a statement.

After gathering evidence, the police immediately raided the KTV bar and arrested a dozen women, two of them transgender.

According to the police, the women worked as guest relations officers in the club. Some of them also danced naked on the stage.

The police released 11 of the 12 club workers yesterday but Jessie Mercurio, a cleaner against May Espino, 24, the woman who was photographed by the police.

Espino, a resident of Barangay Pinagbuhatan, is now detained at the Pasig City police station.

Police said they were verifying the identity of the owner of the bar who was not in the establishment during the raid.

NOT BEFORE I'VE HAD MY COFFEE A man who lives in one of the shanties built underneath a bridge in Paranaque City starts his day right—with a cup of steaming coffee. AU/TSC

Guidelines out for QC LPG gasoline stations

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THE QUEZON CITY COUNCIL is set to start regulating the construction and operation of auto gas or liquefied petroleum gas stations in the area based on guidelines enumerated in an ordinance approved last year.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte recently submitted into law Ordinance SP-1826, series of 2007, approved in December by the City Council.

Among its provisions is a distance of two kilometers between LPG-dispensing stations to ensure the safety of residents living in the area.

"While expansion of the auto gas industry is welcomed and encouraged, it is also the commitment of the city government to ensure that the safety of the general public is not compromised," the ordinance said.

Those who fail to comply with the requirements would not be issued a zoning clearance and building permit by the city government.

However, auto gas and LPG-dispensing stations which are already operating and have complied with all the requirements for construction prior to the approval of the ordinance are exempted from the law.

The new ordinance also requires those who want to put up a station to register with the Department of Trade and Industry or the Securities and Exchange Commission and to get an Environmental Compliance Certificate from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau or the Laguna Lake Development Authority.

Woman lone casualty in 5-vehicle collision

By Julie M. Aurelio

A WOMAN SUSTAINED MINOR injuries in a five-vehicle collision on the South Superhighway in Parañaque City at 7:10 a.m. yesterday.

SPO2 Ramon Pagadis of the Traffic Management Group in Bicutan identified the victim as Maria Nazarena Pagara, 36, of Sta. Rosa, Laguna province.

An initial investigation showed that the victim was driving a Honda City 1337 UM) on the northbound lane of the highway fronting the South Superhighway Medical Center when the last started the wheel.

Pagadis said the victim then hit a Kia Sportz van (WSG 377) which belonged the car in front of it, a Nissan Sentra (TDG 433).

Two other vehicles behind the VIOMO vehicle also crashed into her car—a Toyota Hi Ace van and a Toyota Revo.

Pagadis added that no one else was injured but in the incident, apart from the victim who suffered minor contusions.

New schools for Muntinlupa studes

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE MUNTINLUPA CITY GOVernment will put up three new schools, including one for families affected by the Southrail project.

During the celebration of Muntinlupa's 13th cityhood anniversary last Saturday, Mayor Aldrin San Pedro said there was a need to build more classrooms to accommodate the growing number of students.

The new schools are Cupang High School, Bayanan High School and the Alabang Elementary and High Schools inside the New Bilibid Prison reservation.

Southrails is the government-funded housing project for resettlers facing relocation because of the Southrail rehabilitation project.

"This is in response to the growing student population in the city. It is up to us to try and lessen the students to classroom ratio," San Pedro said.

As present, there are four public high schools in the city: Muntinlupa National High School, Pedro L. Diaz High School, Muntinlupa Science High School and Muntinlupa Business High School.

San Pedro said the student population in the four schools totaled 29,914 as of December, based on statistics from the Department of Education.

The average student to instructional room ratio in the four schools was 1:46 while the average teacher to student ratio was 1:45.

There are 17 public elementary schools in the city with a total population of 63,771.

Accordingly, San Pedro, the city government will initially build a four-story building for the new schools in Cupang and Bayanan.

It is also building a four-story school building for the Panaan, near ng Lungsod ng Muntinlupa, a resettlement and a permanent home for Muntinlupa Science High School, a two-story annex for special education at the Alabang Elementary School and a four-story building for the Ilaya Elementary School.

MetroBriefs

Bishop loses SUV to thieves

A BISHOP found an unpleasant surprise waiting for him right after he presided over the morning worship service of the church in Calamba City. Senior Insp. Ernesto Rivera Jr. said unidentified men took the sport utility vehicle of Bishop Paulilbert Kennedy, 61, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, between 8:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Sunday. According to Kennedy, a bishop of the Christian Fellowship International, his driver parked his white Mitsubishi Pajero (UB-1601) on San Francisco Street in Bagong Barrio, Calamba City. At the end of the worship service, Kennedy discovered that his SUV had disappeared, prompting him to ask the police for help.

Victor L. Alave

Barangay official shot dead

A 58-YEAR-OLD barangay official was shot dead by two men riding tandem on a motorcycle in Parañaque City on Sunday night. Police are still investigating the motive behind the killing of Benemerito Lindo Bernardo, a councilor of Barangay San Dionisio. PO1 Johnny Mangubat, case investigator, said the two men apparently waited for the victim on N. Fabian Street in Barangay San Dionisio on Sunday night. They later shot Bernardo in the head when they spotted him walking on the street and then left on board their motorcycle. Mangubat said the victim was immediately rushed to the Parañaque City Community Hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival by Dr. Dante Granadio. Bernardo's body was moved to the Funeraria Funeral Homes where it would be embalmed.

Julie M. Aurelio

Man's body found in river

THE BODY of a man believed to be around 30 to 35 years old was found floating in the Pasig River near the Sta. Ana ferry station yesterday. SPO2 Dennis Apuan of the Manila Police District Homicide division said the old unidentified victim was spotted by a boatman, Ryan Canala, at 9:15 a.m. yesterday. The man was described as bald and clad in a black T-shirt and a pair of shorts. Apuan said the victim's cause of death was yet to be determined. The body was later taken to a funeral parlor for autopsy.

Alben M. Lopez

2 shot dead by men on motor bikes in QC

By Marlon Ramos

TWO MEN ON BOARD A MOTORcycle shot dead two others in two raids in Quezon City on Sunday night, police said yesterday.

A report from the Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (QCPD-CIDU) identified the victims as Jeff Manrique, 40, and his friend, Richard Alba, 25, both died on the spot from multiple gunshot wounds.

The police said the victims and their friend, Leslie Sandhills, had just come out of the Sister Yolanda Bar on Regalado Avenue, Fairview when they were approached by two motorcycle-riding men at around 10:30 p.m. Sunday.

Without saying a word, the two men shot the victims at close range using a .45-caliber handgun and a 9mm pistol.

Sandhills, on the other hand, was able to run away.

The assailants then fled toward Barangay Sauyo.

Before they were killed, the victims were seen drinking inside the bar with Sandhills and another man identified as Allan Sana, the police report said.

During questioning, Sana told police investigators that Alba had quarrelled with a still unidentified man who was allegedly Sandhills's former boyfriend.

The man asked Alba not to go home because he didn't want we get involved," Sana added.

PO2 Jun Bluvel, QCPD-CIDU investigator, said they will also invite Sandhills for questioning.

What's wrong with having Noli de Castro as president, anyway?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

WHAT KIND OF THINKING DO some people in the opposition have?

They want President Gloria replaced, but they don't want Vice President Noli to take her place.

They want a military junta? That's stupid!

* * *

Take it from Gen. Gregorio Honasan, a former rebel leader who headed several coup attempts against President Cory: "The most important thing is that we should not divide the military."

Honasan said shelling the military through another Edsa uprising at this time would be "bloody."

"In those inciting the military, are you willing to take responsibility in case of an armed confrontation?" said Honasan.

"If it happens," he adds, "without me like it or not, are you all going to stand in the trenches for your beliefs, at all costs, in fight for the truth?" he added.

In short, Honasan doesn't want leadership change through confrontation between civilians.

Gringo Honasan is a changed man.

* * *

What's wrong with Noli de Castro, anyway?

He is GMA's constitutional successor in case she flies, gets impeached or resigns.

De Castro is much more intelligent and competent than Erap.

He wouldn't have reached the highest peak in his broadcasting career if he were just a son of the mill broadcaster.

Why are people in the opposition and his allies in the GMA administration afraid of a De Castro takeover?

Because he's very popular among the masses.

If GMA resigned tomorrow and called for a snap election, Noli de Castro would win handily over his rivals for the presidency.

* * *

It's just a matter of time before GMA steps down.

Unless she's made of iron, she will eventually relent to the pressure being put to bear on her by the citizenry.

Everybody except those who benefit from her wants her out of office.

* * *

The participation of students in the "GMA Resign" movement signaled the death knell of the Arroyo presidency.

The students are a force to reckon with in forcing governments to change policies and leaders.

The American students in different campuses in the 1960s and 1970s forced the US government to withdraw its Vietnam war effort.

The students drove the Shah of Iran, the most powerful monarch in the world during his time, out of office.

Here at home, the student initiated Mitsuan Defense Alliance groundswell in 1992.

* * *

Why is the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) divided on the issue of GMA resignation?

Because, according to many people in the inner sanctum of the Arroyo administration, many bishops and archbishops are on the government payroll.

The money these church leaders allegedly receive is euphemistically called "donation."

Aw, c'mon guys, don't be shocked!

Priests and bishops are also human like you and me.

* * *

I have known Manila Mayor Lito Atienza since he was still superintendent (Lieutenant colonel) at the Western Police District (WPD) when I covered as a crime reporter.

But I admire him more now than ever.

When I went to visit him at his office recently, I noticed a big portrait of GMA prominently displayed on the wall.

I asked Lito, who takes part in all anti-Arroyo rallies, why the portrait still has a place in his inner sanctum.

His reply: "Miss, she's our president. If she resigns, then I will remove that portrait immediately."

That's loyalty to the Constitution at its finest.

METRO
Citizen's Call
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Your stories. We're all ears to it.
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P.S.

Hamas claims Gaza 'victory' as Israel pulls out

GAZA—ISRAELI TROOPS pulled out of the Gaza Strip on Monday after days of fighting that killed more than 100 people and drew an appeal from Washington to end violence and restart peace talks with the Palestinians.

The Hamas Islamists who control the coastal enclave declared "victory" and vowed to continue firing rockets into Israel. But the Israeli government declared it had achieved its objective of deterring attacks, which have disrupted life in border towns.

At dawn, as Gaza residents streamed out of homes where they had been pinned for days by the heavy fighting, a spokesperson for the Hamas armed wing said it would continue firing rockets into Israel. "The enemy has been defeated," he said.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said: "Gaza will always be a graveyard for the occupation forces."

On the eve of a visit by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israel had been under pressure from its ally in Washington to halt the violence after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas suspended US-backed peace talks in protest at the bloodshed.

A curfew was ordered at sticker overnight, killing a further three militants, medics and Hamas said. The Army said it had targeted workshops involved in making rockets.

An Israeli government spokesperson said after the troops pulled back on the ground: "We will continue with our defensive actions against those who fire lethal rockets at our civilians."

Vice Premier Haim Ramon, deputy to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told Army Radio: "This operation has run its course.

"The main goal of the Israeli government ... is to end the firing at targets in the south. There were dozens of deaths among the Hamas terrorists—this is certainly destructive."

Hamas officials said they found four bodies in two shops in the Gaza Strip following the Israeli withdrawal, taking the Palestinian death toll since Wednesday to 112.

Medics said Hamas have said about half of them have been civilians, including women and children.

The United Nations condemned Israel for using "excessive force" and Abbas, whose Western-backed forces lost control of Gaza to Hamas in June, said he would not resume talks with Olmert until it ceased. Reuters

A PALESTINIAN woman reads in her damaged house after Israeli troops pulled out of Gaza Strip on March 3 after days of fighting. ALI HASH

Venezuela, Ecuador mass troops at borders

CARACAS, VENEZUELA—Venezuela and Ecuador mobilized troops to their borders with Colombia on Sunday, intensifying a diplomatic crisis after Colombian forces killed a senior guerrilla leader at a jungle camp in Ecuador.

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, whose government has warm ties with the rebel group, threatened Colombia with war and mobilized tank units and fighter jets near the border between the two countries.

Seventeen members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, Latin America's largest insurgency, were killed in Ecuadorean territory on Saturday. The killing also has generated a fierce diplomatic reaction from Ecuador and Venezuela.

President Rafael Correa of Ecuador, a supporter of Chavez, called the operation by Colombian troops a violation of Ecuador's sovereignty. He compelled Colombia's ambassador and withdrew his ambassador from Bogota, while Chavez said he was shutting down Venezuela's embassy there.

Rhetorically at least, Chavez's threat points to one of the most tense standoffs between Venezuela and Colombia in recent decades. Whether or not the saber-rattling produces conflict, Chavez stands to benefit from a distraction from social problems here, like food shortages and surging inflation.

Chavez fanned his warmongering by saying he would react in the event of a Colombian raid to base down guerrillas in Venezuela. He warned President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia, a Bush administration ally, calling him a "really bum," "criminal," "liar" and "lackey of the empire."

"If you decide to do this in Venezuela, pal, we'll send you a few Sukhois," Chavez said, referring to the fighter jets Venezuela has recently acquired from Russia.

Chavez described the senior guerrilla, Raul Reyes, the second most powerful member of the FARC, as "a true revolutionary." He said he had met with Reyes on three occasions from the 1990s onward.

Colombia's government kept silent after Chavez's threats, as it largely has done since a deterioration of ties that began in November when Uribe abruptly withdrew his support for Chavez's mediation with the FARC.

But in response to Ecuador's protest that Colombia had violated its sovereignty, Colombia's foreign ministry apologized Sunday night. Correa called the apology a "mockery."

Strengthening trade links among Andean countries suggest that the tensions will soon die down.

Trade between Colombia and Venezuela, for instance, still flourishes despite a hiccup in some industries caused by the most recent political outburst. Venezuela relies on a natural gas pipeline from Colombia for its extraction of oil around Lake Maracaibo. NYT

ECUADOREAN soldiers walk by the corpses of alleged FARC rebels and their arms on March 2 during a rescue operation in Angostura, Ecuador, after a bombing by the Colombian Army on Saturday. AFP

Chinese yellow sand hits Japan, S. Korea

SEOUL—HAZARDOUS YELLOW sand from China covered parts of South Korea and Japan on Monday, keeping people indoors as Tokyo pressed Beijing to reveal more information to the public.

Schools were closed as the dust blanketed southern parts of the Korean peninsula, while Japan advised people to be cautious and predicted the dust would continue for another day.

Yellow dust—fine sand from Mongolia's Gobi Desert which sometimes includes toxic chemicals—usually hits South Korea and Japan in the spring. It can cause respiratory disorders.

In Tokyo, Environment Minister Ichito Kamoshita severely called on Beijing to disclose data on the yellow sand.

"Almost yellow sand, I am not quite sure how and why it can be regarded as a national secret," Kamoshita told a press conference last month.

"Air is connected beyond national borders, and yellow sand travels beyond borders. I think it is important we share information," he said.

Japan, China and South Korea have begun joint research on the phenomenon. Japan's environment ministry recently began posting observation data and forecasts for dust waves on the Internet.

But according to Japan, China has refused to release its own data and has insisted that any joint findings be kept from the public.

In South Korea, nursery and elementary schools were shut down along the southern coast including in the country's second largest city of Busan.

Weather officials said the dust had blanketed much of South Korea and expected the yellow storm blanket would sweep the peninsula more often this year than in the past. AFP

Asian cockroach could benefit Texas planters

LUBBOCK, TEXAS—LOATHED by homeowners and restaurateurs, the lowly cockroach is gaining some respect in the agricultural community of Texas.

Researchers in South Texas are beginning to sing the praises of a flying cockroach from Asia which has shown a voracious appetite for pests that plague farmers. They assemble, however, that most people would still feel more comfortable with the sight of the helpful predator.

"It just brings out this visceral reaction in people," said Bill Pfannenstiel, an entomologist with the US Department of Agriculture. "There's just much cultural antipathy here because of the other cockroaches."

The other cockroaches include the German variety, a common breed that doesn't fly and is often seen scurrying from customtrips when kitchen lights are flicked on.

The Asian cockroach, Blatella emarginal, is almost identical in appearance to the German variety, except it is also active at night. But instead of leftover pizza, it leans on insects harmful to crops.

They first appeared in Florida in 1986, and the species has expanded its range ever since. They've migrated to Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama and up the East Coast.

They ventured west into Texas in 2006, and became the most common predator of bollworm eggs in the state's Rio Grande Valley region. The bollworm devastates cotton, soybeans, corn and tomatoes crops.

About 86 percent of the pests' eggs—which Pfannenstiel and colleagues placed out in fields to conduct research—were gone within 24 hours. AP

Singapore butt of jokes after suspect bolts jail

SINGAPORE—TERRORISM IS usually no laughing matter, especially not in recently conscious Singapore, but the escape from custody of a fleeping Islamist extremist suspect has led to sneers on the Internet.

Barbed jokes and irreverent spoofs have appeared up on websites five days after Hilmi Hasmar bin Hasnan, the alleged Singapore chief of regional terror group Jemaah Islamiyah, escaped with apparent ease from a detention center.

"Toilet break, lasted on a minute-worrying blow-holocaust fanatic," read a mock post on one website by a blogger inspired by the hit US television drama "Prison Break."

Blogger Philip Chia wrote: "Singapore has now dropped the ball big time and reality is an intermittent fuse going off."

Hasnat, who was arrested in neighboring Indonesia in 2006 and turned over to Singapore, remained at large Monday and officials said he was likely to be still hiding in this multiracial island republic of 4.7 million people.

Accused of planning to hijack a plane in order to crash it into Singapore's Changi airport in 2001, Hasnat managed to escape after asking to go to the toilet during a family visit, security officials said.

Street criticism of the government is rare in the mainstream media, having diminished Singaporeans's to resort to the Internet to express their views.

Talkingcock.com, a popular satirical site, said Hasnat's escape underlined the need to give Cabinet ministers another salary hike even though they were already among the highest-paid in the world.

"We need to equip our Ministers with everything they can to deal with this crisis," it said. AFP

White House e-mail system in a mess

WASHINGTON—FOR PRESident George W. Bush, who exposes disdain for e-mail, the White House system of electronic record-keeping is a good match.

Even if Bush used e-mail, it might get lost in the problem-plagued White House computer system.

"I don't want you reading my personal mail," the president explained to newspaper editors three years ago on why he doesn't send electronic messages.

In Congress and in federal court, a congressional committee and two private groups are pushing for information on how the White House has handled its e-mail for the past six years and whether officials have complied with records-preservation laws.

The picture emerging from testimony and court filings is one of disregard for fundamental principles that well-run private companies adhere to routinely. By one estimate, over 1,000 days of e-mail are missing from various White House offices.

"I would call this negligence," said Mark Epstein, director of technical services for Carahsoft Inc., a California company that specializes in retrieval and analysis of electronic information.

The White House's first painstaker, Epstein and other technical experts say, was starting in a way to avoid serving without first setting up an archiving system that would allow speedy, reliable searches and recovery of electronic messages.

"This is the first time I've personally run across this kind of process for archiving; the White House relied on human beings to do specific manual processes on a regular basis and I would not recommend it," said William Tobin, who has consulted on e-mail problems for hundreds of companies and state and local governments.

The White House e-mail saga began in 2002 with a decision to upgrade electronic message capabilities and move from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Exchange.

Prior to launching Microsoft Exchange for e-mail, there should have been full-scale testing of an archiving system, e-mail experts said. In addition, both the existing archiving system and a new one should have run at the same time during the new system's early phases.

Two federal laws, one carrying criminal penalties, require preservation of White House e-mail.

At the end of Bush's presidency, e-mail and other White House records will be turned over to the National Archives.

The White House began work on archiving issues in 2002, but "essentially, development ... was delayed after the 2004 election," according to a National Archives document disclosed in a hearing Tuesday before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

White House official Theresa Payton said she attended the planned meeting in late 2006 because the new system was set up at the time. The White House is awaiting on a new system, she added.

"It is clear from Theresa Payton's testimony that this series of projects failed to follow typical practices used for new deployments in sensitive environments," said Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-NY). "These projects have taken far longer than they should have."

Computer experts point out that the switch to a new system that the White House botched is successfully accomplished every year for e-mail systems that process much larger numbers of users than the 2,000 in the White House.

Lawyers say the documents in the White House's system would have prompted major legal problems had the White House been operating in the private sector.

The WORLD

Edna Lawrence B. Olaroo

Putin's man Medvedev wins Russia vote

MOSCOW—DMITRY MEDVEDEV, PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin's hand-picked successor, won a landslide victory in Russia's presidential poll, preliminary results showed on Monday, as critics charged the vote was rigged.

Medvedev won 73.3 percent of the vote based on results from 50 percent of the country's polling stations, the election commission said.

Its results collated in, Putin and Medvedev celebrated at a rock concert on Red Square in scenes broadcast repeatedly on national television.

"Together we can continue the course set by President Putin... Together we'll go further. Together we'll win. Hurrah!" Medvedev, dressed in jeans and a leather jacket, told a crowd of supporters beneath driving rain.

Medvedev, 42, also offered assurances that he would be his own man, including in foreign policy, despite his promise to appoint Putin prime minister.

He said there were no plans to change the president and the prime minister's powers, which "foreign policy, according to the constitution, is determined by the president."

Observer team Initial voting began, foreign observers had criticized the unfair conditions in which the election was held, with Medvedev given blanket media coverage and liberal opponents prevented from registering.

Both opposition parties and independent observers monitoring organization Golos alleged large-scale violations on voting day.

The only Western observer group not to have boycotted the polls, a group from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, was to give an assessment on Monday having already described the choice as offering "limited as been."

Additional violations by several European newspapers suggested that Western governments were reluctant to do more angles about be critical.

The Financial Times Deutschland said it would be "an insult to democracy" to speak of a democratic election, while Italy's La Stampa referred to "a democracy that many consider mutilated, even destroyed."

The latest returns put Communist Party leader Gennady Tyuganov in second place with 17.6 percent, followed by the nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky with 9.6 percent and the almost unknown Andrei Bogdanov with 1.3 percent.

The criticism by European newspapers contrasted with the headlines of the mainly pro-Kremlin Russian newspapers.

The Izvestia newspaper declared the vote a "triumph of the majority."

And the business newspaper RBK said the Medvedev-Putin tandem had been given "carte blanche for extraordinary measures" in case of economic crisis ahead.

Medvedev's triumph was a foregone conclusion given his backing from Putin, who has amassed huge powers in his eight-year presidency and as prime minister is expected to retain a key role in leading the world's top energy exporter.

In the latest example of Russia flexing its energy muscle, massive Gazprom said it planned to reduce by 25 percent gas supplies to neighboring Ukraine from Monday morning over a gas payment dispute.

Another controversial issue was likely to be how Russia's police dealt later Monday with two planned opposition protests. Such demonstrations have often been violently dispersed in the past.

Incomplete official figures showed turnout in Sunday's vote for 70 percent among the 109 million eligible voters.

Medvedev, currently the first deputy premier and long-time chair of Gazprom, represents a new generation of post-Soviet politicians, unlike Putin, 55, he has no KGB or other security service background. AFP

RUSSIA'S President Vladimir Putin (left) and First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev waving to the crowd during a concert in Moscow on March 2. REUTERS

Key facts on Medvedev

Early life

Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev was born Sept. 14, 1965. His parents were teachers and he grew up in a 40-square-meter flat in a suburb of Leningrad, as St. Petersburg was then called.

He says his favorite childhood books were the Soviet Encyclopedia—similar to the Britannica—and the Soviet version of Jules Verne's "Children of Captain Grant."

"He was a leader, people listened to him. He is calm, disciplined and confident," said Irina Grigorevskaya, his mathematics teacher at school 305, where he met his wife. "He now will read that a young age and he read a lot."

Medvedev says the family never starved and hobbled on the Black Sea, a typical Soviet middle-class destination, but money was sometimes too short to buy the records he devoured of.

A fan of British hard rock bands Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and Deep Purple, Medvedev said he became disillusioned with Soviet propaganda.

Medvedev was christened in the Russian Orthodox church aged 23 in St. Petersburg.

Student

Medvedev went to study law, graduating from the law department of St. Petersburg University in 1987 that later became a source of the hoax and then Kremlin elite.

Putin graduated from the same faculty in 1975 and Anatoly Sobchak, Putin's political mentor and later mayor of St. Petersburg, taught at the faculty.

"He was one of the bright sparks from civil law," said Nikolai Krupachev, current dean of the law faculty who worked with Medvedev in the 1990s. "If you asked him to find two solutions to a problem, he would find three, or find a solution no one had even found before."

Medvedev submitted a sparkling dissertation and went on to teach civil law at the faculty where he retained student loans a good grasp of Latin.

He also worked for the external relations committee of the St. Petersburg mayor's office where he established a friendship with Putin, who was also working for the mayor after returning from a KGB posting to Dresden.

Kremlin

After being appointed prime minister in August 1999, Putin invited Medvedev to Moscow, appointing him deputy head of the government administration in November. Reuters

ABKHAZIAN troops guard the streets of the capital Sukhumi on March 2. Authorities imposed a state of emergency late March 1 following clashes between riot police and protesters.

'Living goddess' retires at age 11

KATHMANDU, NEPAL—AN 11-year-old girl revered as a living goddess in Nepal has retired only less than a year after the sparked controversy by breaking tradition and meeting overseas, officials said Monday.

Sajani Shakya was nominated among the top three of Nepal's revered "Kumaris," or living goddesses.

Ashprasad Regmi, chief of the government's trust that manages the affairs of the living goddesses, said Sajani is to be replaced because she had "come of age" and said the decision had nothing to do with last year's row.

Sajani was temporarily stripped of her revered status last July when she traveled to the United States to promote a documentary about Nepal's centuries-old tradition of living goddesses.

Officials removed her title while she was overseas because of tradition that living goddesses do not leave the homeland. Popular support for Sajani apparently forced officials to reverse the decision within days.

On return to Nepal, Sajani was met by hundreds of her supporters and followers who took her in the temple where she is worshipped and held a brief ceremony to welcome her back.

Referred as goddess, living goddesses usually keep their positions until they reach puberty, meaning that Sajani, at age 11, is retiring slightly early.

Living goddesses are worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists. The girls are selected between the ages of 2 and 4 after going through several tests.

They are required to have perfect skin, hair, eyes and teeth, should not have scars and should not be afraid of the dark. AP

SAJANI Shakya

Armenia quiet after crackdown on protests

YEREVAN, ARMENIA—TANKS blocked central streets in the capital of this tiny mountain country on Sunday, a day after Armenian authorities clashed with demonstrators in a violent crackdown that left at least eight people dead and more than 150 wounded.

The government imposed a state of emergency, and for the first time since a contested Feb. 19 presidential election, the streets and central squares of this ancient city were empty of the crowds of protesters.

Any attempts at demonstrating "will immediately result in adequate and strict reaction by the armed forces," said Gen. Seyran Ohanyan, Armenia's top military commander.

Levon Ter-Petrossian, the opposition leader who has led the protests, and whose failed candidacy was the reason for the protests, said that he would not encourage his supporters to defy the curfew, and that the government had won by closing down his only outlet to the public.

Lines of military police officers moved in on the demonstration late Saturday night, firing rubber bullets and tear gas canisters, and shooting bullets into the air. It was not clear how many of the deaths were caused by bullet wounds.

Seven civilians and one security officer were killed, according to the Foreign Ministry. Of the 131 injuries, 72 were police officers and 58 were civilians, Agence France-Presse reported, citing the Health Ministry.

The unrest has interrupted statements of concern by the State Department, the European Union and the US High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Local television stations, controlled by Prime Minister Serge Sarkissian and President Robert Kocharian, virtually ignored the daily rallies, which often drew tens of thousands of protesters.

According to the emergency decree, local news media are barred from disseminating information given by any source other than the government.

CNN segments about Armenia were clipped from television programming, and many websites were blocked. Daily journals in print foreign news organizations could attend Ter Petrossian's briefing.

Armenian authorities have used violence against political opposition several times over the past 15 years. In 1995, during Ter Petrossian's tenure as president, at least one opposition figure died in police custody after his political party was shut down, according to Human Rights Watch. AFP

Malaysian churches break taboo on politics

KUALA LUMPUR—HOLY SAINTS churches have wended into the ranks of a charged politics, open by urging Christians to support candidates who back religious freedom in the weekend's election.

Fires and religious tensions have mounted in the run-up to the March 8 vote with Buddhist, Christian and Hindu minorities complaining their rights are being trampled by the Muslim-dominated government.

The Christian Federation of Malaysia has joined the fray by telling Christians to vote for candidates whose political views and policies "reflect God's standard and Christian values."

They advocate to their party performance and for their stand on issues related to constitutional rights, civil liberties and the freedom of religion," the church's biggest church group said in its election message.

In a rare move, the Catholic Church of Saint Francis Xavier near the capital Kuala Lumpur held a political debate last week, drawing some 200 people including opposition and government candidates.

"It's very difficult to practice our religion freely. The leaders in Malaysia, the way they interpret laws is very scary" said Albert Tei, a Catholic.

"Racial integration is going from bad to worse," the 45-year-old property developer said after a church service, adding that he was likely to vote for the opposition.

Christians make up about 10 percent of Malaysia's 26-million people. Muslim Malays from just over half while the remaining are other Hindus, Buddhists or Sikhs.

Christians say they are upset over a series of developments, the latest being a government ban on the use of the word "Allah" for God in Malay-language Christian literature.

The dispute came out in the open after the internal security ministry ruled the term Allah—long used by Christians in Malaysia—was not to God—could only be used by Muslims.

And last month, a church group told the government to stop harassing Christians after authorities seized Bibles from them. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
■ Els ends US Tour drought at Honda Classic /A25

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Mel ... Vice Francis T.J. Ochoa

Watch PBL games

MOST VALUABLE: Dennis Espino

STA. LUCIA owner Ernesto Rubio (left) and team boss Buddy Encarnado hoist the Realtors' first all-Filipino trophy

Phone Pals tap 6-8 US 'NC' banger

By Marang R. Castillo

TALK 'N TEXT HAS EMPHASIZED A FORMER DLSU-bound Aussie in the US NCAA, Aaron McGhee, as the Phone Pals try to improve on their second place finish in last year's Fiesta Cup with the Final Four venues and a new coach.

McGhee, a 6-foot-8 banger who played in the NCAA semifinals in 2005, played in Sunday night and was supposed to join the team yesterday even as owned darling Barangay Ginebra dubbed to cause in import pending the signing of a contract.

Chot Reyes will return to coach Dik Ti'Ton, sending not only to win another championship, but to also snap a six-year title drought by the PLDT franchise.

McGhee was never picked in the 2000 NBA draft.

Jong Uichico of the Gin Kings, on the other hand, politely declined to name their choice for an import, saying that they have "three prospects at this point."

"We haven't cleared a deal with anyone yet," Uichico told the Inquirer over the phone. "It would be better if we name him [import] once

PHOTO FILE/ICH

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Realtors hit paydirt

Lady luck shines at last on Sta. Lucia after 15 seasons

By Marang R. Castillo

THIS ONE ALMOST DID not come out of the oven.

It was—for the longest time—an unfulfilled promise.

But as the old cliché goes, it's better late than never.

Sta. Lucia, which has tried so many conjectures but to come up with the perfect all-Filipino club, hit paydirt after 15 fifth seasons this day night by nailing the former Philippine Cup crown at Pamboan's side that was one of the qualms on becomes all-Filipino champion in history.

A 100-88 Game 7 victory over Hare-frank in front of the year's biggest crowd at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao put an end to the long wait and finally gave team executives the chance to say "promise fulfilled."

"Even after we lost our first game [of the tournament] to Pure-Gold by four points, I knew our load organized more," said team manager and fin. Lucia board member Buddy Encarnado at on the win. "We know that this team was going somewhere."

"We promised our fans an all-Filipino title, and here it is."

Somewhere is a place not all teams have been to as the Realtors season are one title in franchise history while hogging the most coveted crown of the year.

"No one believed we could do it but ourselves," said coach Bayet Pascua, now a champion-maker in 12-plus years but now a winning mentor who joined the roster of the elite nation Baby Dalupan, Sunny Jawerth, Sonny Barrera, Norman Black, Tim Cone and the conquered player favorite, to name some.

"I am very happy," he added.

That promise was officially started in 1993, when Realtors owner were accepted as an expansion hubbub and built their team around their super rookie Jun Limpot.

Sta. Lucia had all sorts of chances to come up with a championship caliber squad in the past but gave up the likes of Allan Caidic, Dave Hendricks and Bong Alvarez, saying "we are not out here to buy a championship."

It was even involved in one of the most celebrated "fit them" cases in the league, when it netted up Bob Medalla

Parker at the height of the overseas reinforcement frenzy, and this forced the team to wait up recently for a prospective team for many years just to be able to import the experience.

But all that changed when the Realtors joined Kelly Williams from the draft last year and added the workmanlike Ryan Reyes this season from the rookie pool. That boosted their reach to realize the class worked harmoniously with the veterans.

The Realtors then got the championship playoff boost from the player who finally lived up to his superstar potential, Bonzie Espino, who performed at his best in the rubber match which undoubtedly will become the highlight of that pro career.

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UST set to wrap up 10th overall UAAP championship

By Jaemilar W. Pays

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS seemed poised to capture the UAAP overall championship for the 10th straight year after picking up one more title in the last three events decided over the weekend.

UST split volleyball honors with the Tamaraws while Adamson captured the baseball crown as the curtain rang down on the league's 74th season.

But UST's jubilation was dashed yesterday by news that long-time women's volleyball coach August Sta. Maria, who steered the Tigresses to unmistakable dynasties, had suffered a stroke and is now half-paralyzed.

The Tigers sealed the Tamaraws' three-year reign in men's volleyball with a 25-20, 23-25, 23-19, 20-25, 15-13 victory to clinch the best-of-three Finals series, 2-1, Sunday night at The Arena in San Juan.

But it's the Lady Tamaraws who made a mark in women's action with a thrilling 34-20, 25-15, 23-25, 21-25, 15-9 triumph over the Lady Falcons in a title series that also reached the full distance.

In baseball, the Falcons dethroned the Tigers with a 3-2 win in their winner-take-all Game 5 duel last Sunday at the Rizal Memorial ballpark.

The men's volleyball title was the Tigers' sixth crown this season. They swept the tennis competition and added men's table tennis, men's fencing, women's swimming, women's chess, women's taekwondo and women's badminton.

MVP Dave Ildefonso, James Peralta and Julio Torres paced the Tigers, who reclaimed the men's volleyball title they last won in the 2002-03 season.

The Tigers reached match point, 14-11, on a Bonjie Ildi, and the Tamaraws sealed their own doom on a Jan Delfianza ill-fated out of bounds.

Mendoza registered with 21 markers, while Torres added 12 hits.

In the women's Finals, the Lady Tamaraws spoiled the Lady Falcons' bid for their first championship behind the brilliant outside hitting of MVP Wendy Ann Semana, Shaira Morada and Rachel Daquis.

Shaira paced the Lady Tams with 16 kills, while Mendoza chipped in 15.

Bonna Jamito emerged as MVP after powering the Falcons to their first baseball championship in six years.

HARBOUR Centre star Jason Castro lays it up off Rossa Ilmas' Cris Robles in a recent game won by the Batang Pier, 79-48

Harbour five, Hapee tackle separate foes

OCCUPYING TOP SPOT MAKES A BREEZE for unbeaten teams Harbour Centre and Super Toothpaste, but their coaches will continue to demand better performances when they tackle separate foes in the PBL Interim Sports Cup today.

"We've just played 80 to 85 percent," said coach Jorge Gallent of his Batang Pier, who are seeking a third straight victory in the young tournament against Sinchee Energy Drink.

"For us to win, we have to distribute the ball well."

Harbour Centre will open a three-game bill against Sinchee at 2 p.m. at Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Hapee will try to keep pace with Harbour when it takes on the Tinkio Philippine Youth Team in the 6 p.m. nightcap after the 4 p.m. match between Super King and Toyota Otis.

"We have to play better defense," coach Leon Isla said last Saturday after Hapee topped Sinchee, 85-83, behind a triple by Mark Barkwon.

"We play defense for three minutes, then it disappears. "We have to be more consistent."

The other undefeated squad and four-time champion Batang Pier are tied at 2-0.

Offensively, however, Barkwon and PBA Gabe Norwood can naturally delivered for the Complete Protein, both in crucial stretch runs.

Norwood, working double-time in the absence of prolific scorer Jimi Jumilla, had a game-high 21 points, seven rebounds and four assists in his last outing.

"We're now looking for Gabe to score," said Alas. "And if Norwood's back, we'll be more explosive."

Jumilla, a 6-foot-3 veteran, has yet to rejoin the Complete Protein dockets despite promising to return from Cebu over the weekend.

Meanwhile, Super King tries to stretch its win streak to three after an opening day setback.

Top gunner Marty Antonio, Abel Nitto, eljay Jimbon and Nestor Daniel have found help from new recruits Mr. Quiet Type, who scored 17 points in the Whoppers' 82-61 triumph over the national youth squad. *Jaemilar W. Pays*

STANDINGS	W	L
Harbour	2	0
Hapee	2	0
Pharex	2	0
Batang Pier	2	0
Sinchee	1	1
Rizal XV	1	1
Toyota Otis	0	2
Mercator	0	2
SB Coffee	0	2

GAMES TODAY (Rizal Memorial)

11 a.m.—Hapee vs Toyota Otis
Team Practice
12 p.m.—Super King vs Mercator
2 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Sinchee
4 p.m.—Batang Pier vs Pharex

Konica celeb Pro-Am tees off at Riviera

SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR CAPtains of industry take a break today as they play in the Celebrity Konica Manila Pro-Am at The Riviera Golf Club in Silang, Cavite.

With former President Fidel V. Ramos leading the select field, some 71 corporate bigwigs team up with the hottest professionals in the land to vie for the tournament's top prize, a new Honda Civic 1.8 S Elegance sedan.

A Toyota car will be waited as a hole-in-one prizes, aside from cash prizes to the winning pros and lucrative merchandise to their amateur partners.

The 18-hole affair will be preceded by the blessing of contestants by chair by Ramos, lawyer Salikneb A. Bunoz of U.Bix Corp., Toyota Motor Phils' Daniel M. Isla, H.E. #WWWDeepens' Rod Delacruz, Cosmos Danny Huanes Ong, and DOST Secretary Lourdes Montehera, who is also the president of the organizing Association's all Association of the Philippines.

Another Toyota model will be waited as a hole-in-one prize during the tournament proper on March 8.

Today's event is a prelude to tomorrow's 15-million Konica Manila National Pro-Am.

Joe Ramos, the amateur champion last year in partnership with Alfredo Ramos, will be back as a professional.

Ramos and Gerard Castaldo, the three-time champion with amateur pal Jil Tampoco bagging 2005, are also in the field.

Harbour five, Hapee tackle separate foes

OCCUPYING TOP SPOT MAKES A BREEZE for unbeaten teams Harbour Centre and Super Toothpaste, but their coaches will continue to demand better performances when they tackle separate foes in the PBL Interim Sports Cup today.

"We've just played 80 to 85 percent," said coach Jorge Gallent of his Batang Pier, who are seeking a third straight victory in the young tournament against Sinchee Energy Drink.

"For us to win, we have to distribute the ball well."

Harbour Centre will open a three-game bill against Sinchee at 2 p.m. at Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Hapee will try to keep pace with Harbour when it takes on the Tinkio Philippine Youth Team in the 6 p.m. nightcap after the 4 p.m. match between Super King and Toyota Otis.

"We have to play better defense," coach Leon Isla said last Saturday after Hapee topped Sinchee, 85-83, behind a triple by Mark Barkwon.

"We play defense for three minutes, then it disappears. "We have to be more consistent."

The other undefeated squad and four-time champion Batang Pier are tied at 2-0.

Offensively, however, Barkwon and PBA Gabe Norwood can naturally delivered for the Complete Protein, both in crucial stretch runs.

Norwood, working double-time in the absence of prolific scorer Jimi Jumilla, had a game-high 21 points, seven rebounds and four assists in his last outing.

"We're now looking for Gabe to score," said Alas. "And if Norwood's back, we'll be more explosive."

Jumilla, a 6-foot-3 veteran, has yet to rejoin the Complete Protein dockets despite promising to return from Cebu over the weekend.

Meanwhile, Super King tries to stretch its win streak to three after an opening day setback.

Top gunner Marty Antonio, Abel Nitto, eljay Jimbon and Nestor Daniel have found help from new recruits Mr. Quiet Type, who scored 17 points in the Whoppers' 82-61 triumph over the national youth squad. *Jaemilar W. Pays*

STANDINGS	W	L
Harbour	2	0
Hapee	2	0
Pharex	2	0
Batang Pier	2	0
Sinchee	1	1
Rizal XV	1	1
Toyota Otis	0	2
Mercator	0	2
SB Coffee	0	2

GAMES TODAY (Rizal Memorial)

11 a.m.—Hapee vs Toyota Otis
Team Practice
12 p.m.—Super King vs Mercator
2 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Sinchee
4 p.m.—Batang Pier vs Pharex

HARBOUR Centre star Jason Castro lays it up off Rossa Ilmas' Cris Robles in a recent game won by the Batang Pier, 79-48

Phone Pals tap NCAA banger

From page A13

on time (by that, which I am sure will happen very soon)."

Ulchur, who said that he finally has a healthy lead roster, admitted that his import will not be an NBA veteran nor former San Miguel reinforcement Ito Long as reported earlier (not in the beginning).

"Even if this will not be an import-laden conference, the idea is to keep the locals healthy," Ulchur, who most played with a complete lineup in the just-concluded Philippine Cup, said.

The Fiesta Cup, where Alaska is the defending champion, will open at the end of the month.

"We started out the (Philippine Cup) conference as very teenagers," he added. "We were never able to get over the hump because by the time I got a complete roster, we were already down in the wild and it's too late."

Ginebra, which was the defending champion last season, lay-by Jay Dehesbarad and the Brink in various stages of the tournament.

Realtors hit paydirt

From page A13

Espino tossed in 20 points, 21 in the finals, as it finally bring down the game Tondo Gunite in the rubber match that fittingly capped a series that was colored with a lot of controversies involving the players, team managers, coaches and the commissioner.

"This is so special," Espino, the top-shelf pick in 2005 who never really blossomed into a star, said after his Magnolia "I never realized that winning would feel so great."

The Chooks is native of Angeles City in Pampanga but four baskets in coding 15-2 run that gave the Realtors a 91 (point) lead heading into the final 1:46 and was later extended to five (5) before it fell with the Finals MVP award.

It was natural to ask Sta. Lucia coaching staff and management of what they thought of a certain energy, having won the first jewel of the year.

"We don't want to think about that at this time," Encarnado said. "We want to enjoy this championship first, because it took a long time to coming."

Hopefully, Sta. Lucia fans wouldn't have to wait that long to savor that winning feeling again.

BEST cage, volley clinics open Apr. 1

KIDS BETTER LEARN BASICS BEFORE WE DO coaches of basketball and volleyball on April 1 while BEST Center clinics for interested sports divers at the Ateneo covered courts.

A Philippine Sportfishers Association Hall of Fame awardee, BEST (Basketball Enhancing and Scientific Training) Center director Ian Gonzalez for info on young aspiring divers did who until to learn basic, intermediate and advanced techniques in basketball and volleyball from the country's premier sports coaches, some on the 2008 pool.

Sunday-Friday sessions start on April 1 for Level 1 students (12 years and above) from 8:30-11:30 a.m. with sessions in basketball and volleyball combined.

Monday-Thursday sessions begin April 3 for Level 1 students (all ages) from 8:30-11:30 a.m. while sessions for Levels 2, 3 and 4 (18 above) start from 1-4 p.m.

For inquiries, call (at 372-3865, 451-6288.

KARTER OF THE YEAR

Marcelo braces for foreign stints

A BIG INSPIRATION FOR HIS COMing conversion titles.

Karter of the Star Strikers Marcelo said that yesterday as he expressed his gratitude to the three sports awards body that paid tribute to his achievements in karting last year.

The 13-year-old Marcelo, backed by San Miguel Corp., Manzanilla and Manolo Racing, was cited by the Philippine Sportswriters Association last month and then honored by the Automobile Association Philippines as its Driver of the Year for 2007 result.

And just recently, he was listed as the Golden Wheel International Driver of the Year in the 5th Golden Wheel Awards night staged at the Pagcor Grand Theater in Pasay City.

"These awards will serve as a big inspiration for my winning years ahead as we're about to start a series of competitions in Europe as a battery driver of Marcelo," he said.

Marcelo will face defense of his title in the kickoff of the 2008 Shell Helix Karting Super Series this weekend at the Carmona Circuit Philippines, then leave next week to vie in the longhaul karting series to the world, the World Super Karting series.

STEFANO Marcelo with Golden Wheel Awards special guests Boston Undersecretary Cynthia Carreon (left) and Sen. Gregorio Honasan

Dancing eyes 2012 Olympic slot

IN APRIL 1995, THE INTERNATIONAL Dance Sport Federation (IDSF) announced that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has granted provisional IOC recognition to dance sport or ballroom dancing.

This is a major step toward having dance sport recognized as an Olympic event.

I say it is almost time.

Pablo Rocky Garcia, president of the Dance Sport Council of the Philippines (which is both a member of the IDSF and the Philippine Olympic Committee), said in a recent interview that she's looking forward to the day when Filipino dance athletes would muster quality techniques just like their world class counterparts and earn that long awaited Olympic slot, possibly in the 2012 London Olympic Games.

"We are internationally ranking our dancers globally competitive," stressed Garcia, a vice president of the Asian Dance Sport Federation and chair of the PSC education and culture commission. "Our dance athletes are now making enormous strides in the international scene."

* * *

In the last Southeast Asian Games held in Thailand, Noel Reyes and Maita Rosete won two gold medals, topping in grand fashion the standard tango and the standard quickstep events.

When the country hosted the SEA Games in 2005,one cohort swept the golds courtesy of veteran instrumentalists Michael Mendoza and Belinda Adora, who ruled the Latin dance category and Rico Rosete and Filomena Salvador, who won in the standard division. The SEA Games, by the way, are IOC-recognized events.

On Friday, some 126 dance couples from all over the country gather once more to try their luck in this year's DSCP 1st Quarter Ranking and Competition-dance PE Cup at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City.

Five DSP adjudicators from Europe and Asia will serve as judges in the blue-ribbon competition, ensuring fairness and honesty to their officiating.

Garcia will be assisted by the DSCP board composed of lawyer Noel Lamata, chair; lawyer Joselina de Vera-Ladia, secretary general; Gloria Alcala, treasurer; and directors lawyer Andy Bautista, Alberto Colmenares-Valle, Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo, Edward Bayot, Bebi Co, Cleto Mercado, Nanette Abrahana, Emma Nieto, Rebecca Ang, Victoria Ho and Griselda Bautista.

For inquiries, call Anna or Lorico at 635-0116.

* * *

JUDGE to the Sta. Lucia Realtors for winning the Smart PBA Philippine Cup before a big Sunday crowd at the Araneta Coliseum, beating the Powerade Tigers, 108-98, and wrapping up the title series, 4-1.

"Believe did it for us," a teary-eyed freddy Encarnado, Sta. Lucia executive and team manager said after the game. It was the second PBA championship for Sta. Lucia team owner Ely Buendia since joining the league in 2001.

"We prepared hard for this series," said a jubilant Boyet Fernandez, who won his first title in only his second year as ILO coach. "I give credit to the boys (veteran Dennis Espino led all scorers with 20 big points), the management and, most of all, the fans."

And Isaias, too, to coach Ling Unites of never-say-die Red Bull Barako, who earlier last week bagged third place at the expense of the Alaska boys.

* * *

THE WIFE of our family doctor, Dra. Leonilda M. Bondoc,who will be competing for the first time in this Friday's DSCP 1st Quarter Ranking and Competition-Alonzo PE Cup at the Philsports Arena. She will team up with Jeffrey Deudo in the rumba and cha-cha-cha events. She is the husband of "Grandpa Ron Cadoo of Mayamanan, Bulacan. Good luck!...

Advance birthday greetings to my longtime friend, sportsman Hermie Espiritu, who celebrates on March 9. And congratulations to my niece, Kaye Palagonia, who will be graduating as "cum laude with honors" (Mercedes Cole) from the University of the Philippines. She is the only daughter of Bebot Hontiveros.

British pugs boost bid for Olympic dominance

LONDON—BRITAIN HAS EARNED A SEVenth slot to the Beijing Olympic boxing program after Billy Joe Saunders qualified for the welterweight division over the weekend.

The 19-year-old from the traveller community, whose great-grandfather was a bareknuckle fairground champion, beat Slovak Pavol Hlavacka in a bronze medal bout off at the penultimate European qualifying event in Pescara, Italy, on Sunday, from where Khalid Yafai and James Degale had earlier qualified.

Seeking four more berths

There is the possibility that Britain could earn four more berths in the final event in Athens next month, a mark common to four years ago when the country had one, by one boxer in the bantam—lightweight—featherweight and Rhys.

Britain's head boxing coach Terry Edwards said Rhys's performance and the extra funding for the sport is inspired was the key to the country's resurgence and could help make Britain the dominant force when they host the Games in 2012.

'Now Cuba of amateur boxing'

"If we are able to keep this current structure in place and go forward as we are now, I truly believe that by the time the London Olympics come around, we will be the new Cuba of amateur boxing," Edwards told the BBC.

"We are seeing a huge change in the way we are being regarded."

Amateur Boxing Association chair Ruth Padwen said: "We can go to the Beijing Olympics this Summer and win three gold medals.

"Two years ago, if I had been told we would get three qualified for the Beijing Games you would probably have locked me up."

Reuters

Kobe fires 52 as Lakers sink Mavs in OT

LAKERS super star Kobe Bryant goes up for a shot past Mavericks' forward Josh Howard (left) in Sunday's featured NBA game in Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES—KOBE BRYANT SCORED 30 OF HIS season-high 52 points in the fourth quarter and overtime to lift the Los Angeles Lakers to a 148-144 win over the Dallas Mavericks on Sunday.

Bryant had 22 points in the fourth quarter as the Lakers overcame a six-point Dallas lead and several eight-point deficits in overtime.

Jason Kidd, who had 33 points and 11 assists, rallied Dallas to within a point at 135-134 with 38 seconds remaining in overtime. However, he missed a free throw and Bryant hit two with nine seconds to go.

"My shots got there my good looks and I think eventually that means the team does," Bryant told reporters. "We really got it done on the defensive end." The Mavericks traveled a three-pointer by Dirk Nowitzki with two seconds left to force overtime.

"Both teams got into a defensive slugfest, it was a total wrestling contest out there for at least the second half," Lakers coach Phil Jackson said.

"The defense was really tenacious, although the last play of regulation's no-no. But it was just to-fore game.

Los Angeles scored the first five points of the extra period on a three-pointer by Sasha Vujacic and Odom's layup.

Bryant also contributed 11 rebounds and four assists.

"To see one single thing did it, Kobe Bryant is probably the reason we didn't lose," Jackson said.

Jim Gasol added 17 points, 14 rebounds and five assists.

Nowitzki led Dallas with 30 points and 13 rebounds.

◆ The Houston Rockets tied a franchise record by beating the Denver Nuggets 103-89 for their 15th consecutive win. Yao Ming had a season-high 22 points and 9 three-pointer 26 for the Rockets.

◆ The San Antonio Spurs cruised to their 49th win in 2008, defeating the New Jersey Nets 93-80 led by Tony Parker's 25 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

◆ LeBron James's game-high 27 points inspired the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 95-86 home win over the Chicago Bulls.

◆ The Boston Celtics won their 18th consecutive game, topping the Atlanta Hawks 96-86 behind Paul Pierce's 30 points and 20 points.

◆ Antawn Jamison's 26 points and nine rebounds paced the Washington Wizards to a 101-84 home win over the New Orleans Hornets.

◆ Stephen Jackson had 29 points and Monta Ellis scored 22 as lead the Golden State Warriors to a 118-104 home victory over the Portland Trail Blazers. Reuters

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Standings	W	L	PCT	GB
Atlantic Division				
Boston	46	13	.780	—
Toronto	37	24	.607	10
Philadelphia	29	31	.483	17½
New Jersey	28	32	.467	18½
New York	18	41	.305	28½
Southeast Division				
Orlando	38	21	.653	—
Washington	29	30	.492	9
Atlanta	29	31	.483	9½
Miami	21	38	.356	16½
Charlotte	20	38	.339	17
Central Division				
Chicago	42	16	.724	—
Detroit	35	24	.593	7½
Indiana	34	26	.567	9
Milwaukee	27	32	.458	15½
Cleveland	26	34	.433	17

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division				
San Antonio	49	11	.817	—
New Orleans	39	18	.684	8
Houston	38	20	.655	9½
Dallas	33	27	.550	15
Memphis	19	41	.317	29½
Northwest Division				
Utah	40	17	.690	—
Denver	36	24	.600	5½
Portland	31	29	.517	10
Seattle	30	30	.500	11
Minnesota	19	41	.317	22½
Pacific Division				
L.A. Lakers	42	18	.700	—
Phoenix	39	20	.661	2½
Golden State	30	27	.526	9
Sacramento	23	36	.390	17½
L.A. Clippers	19	38	.333	20½

RB 14.75

RB's Team — Dallas Mavericks
FA Status: Unrestricted Free Agent

The Big Easy is back

Els ends US Tour drought at Honda Classic

ELS: A great feeling

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Florida...Unbecoming golfer Ernie Els rolled from three shots adrift Sunday to win the $5 million dollar Honda Classic and end his US victory drought.

Els fired a three-under par 67 for a six-under total of 274, one shot in front of England's Luke Donald.

Els was at seven-under before a bogey at 17, but Donald, American Mark Calcavecchia and Australian Matt Jones couldn't catch Elsewhere the final holes.

The South African posted his first win on US soil since 2004, when he won the Sony Open and the Silverstone, the World Golf Championships American Express Championship victory that year crowned as a US tour win, but came to Orlando.

"I really feel very grateful and happy. Obviously it's been quite a ride, you know, especially over here," Els said. "I've won tournaments around the world, some tournaments around the world here and there, but obviously to win over here, it's been really my goal. So, it's a great feeling."

Donald, Calcavecchia and Jones started the day sharing the lead at six-under, but soon broke par on Sunday.

Donald carded a one-over 71 while Calcavecchia and Jones each settled for a three-over 73.

Australian Stephen Leaney finished third after a 67 for four-under 276. Calcavecchia and Jones tied for fourth with Australian Robert Allenby (70) on 277.

Els' victory followed two top-10 finishes in non-US events to start the season, at the European Tour's Dubai Desert Classic, joining the likes of Tiger Woods, Nick Faldo and Ernie Els.

It's a story that shows the route to success sometimes takes a few detours along the way.

Brown, 33, played for nearly a decade on the Australasian, Canadian and Asian tours before giving up in despair at the lack of progress.

"Mentally I wasn't there, and to be honest I wasn't there and my short game wasn't good enough," the New Zealander said.

"In every respect, I really wasn't good enough."

With his father ill, Brown decided to shelve the golf career, buy a house and get a normal job.

"Actually the three years away was quite a good learning curve," he said. "I really did nothing golf-wise apart from watching. I didn't play very much."

Coach Mal Yeager finally persuaded Brown back on to the course, and after an encouraging return to the Asian Tour he broke through at last month's Gold Open, dedicating the win to his father.

"He was always so supportive of my golf in a quiet sort of way," said Brown. "He didn't come and watch me play but when I told him that I was going to give it up, you could tell he was pretty disappointed.

"That was part of the reason for coming back. Also that I would like to do something half decent for him." The hard-grind paid off last weekend as Brown, shooting an inspired five-birdies on his back nine, claimed the title and $430,000 first prize, leaving rivals, including a fantastic comeback.

But despite back-to-back wins the self-effacing Brown, who once beat a youthful Tiger Woods, still has his own firmly fixed on the future. AFP

Well-rested King Roger seeks Dubai conquest

FEDERER: Ready

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB Emirates—Roger Federer is rested and relaxed as he prepares to defend his crown at the Dubai Tennis Championships this week.

The 12-time Grand Slam champion, who lost in the semifinals of the Australian Open, will get back on the court Monday to face Andy Murray in the first round of the tournament he has won in four of the past five years.

It will be Federer's first competitive match since February 1.

"I am feeling mentally and physically refreshed and I think (taking the break) was a good decision," said Federer, who has a second home in Dubai and has been practising in the city for the past 10 days.

Federer, who withdrew from an Australian Open warm-up event because of illness, again said he was sore the disappointment of losing to eventual champion Novak Djokovic.

"It must have taken me a maximum of two hours to get over the loss," Federer said. "Considering the time that I had before the tournament and how it happened my preparation, I wasn't too disappointed.

"But what is more important is that I am feeling much better now than I was over here. I was playing at the Australian Open. So, after struggling a bit there, I am just happy and excited to be back on the court healthy."

His next opponent will be the 12th-seeded Murray, who is 1-1 against Federer and won their last match in Cincinnati in 2006.

"I always expect a tough draw in Dubai because of the quality of the field the tournament attracts," Federer said. "It should be very interesting because I have only played two tournaments in the last four months or so, and he has already won two tournaments this season."

The Briton won in Doha, Qatar, and Marseille, France.

"I just need to believe that I can beat him," Murray said. AP

Near-miss trio top NCA derby favorites today

THREE HORSES WHICH NARROWLY missed the sole championship in the National Cockers' Association (NCA) derby last Feb. 26, 2008, are among the favorites to win today's NCA derby at the Times Center in Puig City.

The victims of Cocky Ramos, Boy Briones and Boy's Pichay as well as Firefly 14 rosters a victory shout of emerging as sole champion of the Feb. 26 derby.

Their last fight defeats meant they shared the championship with the entries of Manny Sinapoos and Firefly 12.

Today's derby, sponsored by the Firefly Group, Robot Oy, owner Villadon and Supering Sup, is expected to go down to the last fight again with Ramos, Briones and Pichay, and Firefly 14 seeking to boost their stocks in the Cockpit of the Year race.

Aside from the NCA members, the event will feature the honorable entries of guests Philip Christopher, Rudy Isabel, Nonoy Marcelo, Jake Ordinario, Leonardo Lim, Alfredo Tews of Muntinlupa, Glendy Ilarenio of San Pablo City, the Mallandingan Brothers, the Farakenn Brothers, Rebel Stone of Central Luzon, Rudy Tanzania, and Jerry Pereira.

BROWN: For my father

Grief to glory: Brown shines after tragedy

LUNCHON, INDIA—THREE YEARS ago, Mark Brown was working in another, unassuming job, recently deceased father and probably giving little thought to the game of golf.

On Sunday, after much hard work and encouragement, he became the latest winner of the Johnnie Walker Classic, joining the likes of Tiger Woods, Nick Faldo and Ernie Els.

It's a story that shows the route to success sometimes takes a few detours along the way.

Brown, 33, played for nearly a decade on the Australasian, Canadian and Asian tours before giving up in despair at the lack of progress.

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But despite back-to-back wins the self-effacing Brown, who once beat a youthful Tiger Woods, still has his own firmly fixed on the future. AFP

SPORTS

NESTEA BEACH VOLLEY

MSU duo starts title defense

By Rainier S. Aurelio

MAGUINDANAO—MINDANAO STATE UNIversity will bank on siblings Shimary and Shoop Abdul-Kadir in its quest for a second straight title as the 12th Nestea Beach Volleyball tournament's Mindanao qualifying round leg off today.

Women is taking over the slot left by Gabriela Tabilisma who partnered Pacop last year to down favored the Eastern University, 21-23, 15-21, 17-15, in the Boracay national finals.

MSU came back from seven points down, 10-3, in the third set to stun the 1999 champion. It was Mindanao's first title in the tournament that also features women's division play.

Defending women's champion University of Visayas will field starter Joanbelle Bullo and Jessa Arnie Igot, who triumphed last year at the expense of the Southwestern University tandem of Marites Nacad and Jennelle Tubio, 22-20, 21-15.

Igot was also the other half of the UV's 2004 pair which lost in the finals to SWU, the tournament's only triple champion with a record run spree from 2001 to 2003.

Tabio will be back this year for GMA with a new partner in Hermione Dalisay.

The winners of the three-day qualifier here, to be held at the Tagum Beach Valley Dome, along with the top-notchers of the Visayas and Luzon legs, will advance to the grand finals set April 24 to 26, in Boracay.

The Luzon leg is set on March 21 to 23 at the Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park in Cavite while the Visayas qualifying is slated at the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod from April 11 to 13.

The Finalists will clash in a series of semifinal knockout matches in the first two days. The surviving four teams will enter the finals.

The national champions will take home P350,000 cash, the runners-up P75,000 each and and the third places P40,000 each.

A total of 72 teams from 40 colleges and universities nationwide have signed up for this year's competition.

The other Mindanao participants are Agusan Institute of Technology, Ateneo de Davao University, Capitol University, 2007 women's division third placer Holy Cross of Davao College, Jose Maria College, Mindanao Institute of Technology, Saint Jose Beginad Agricultural College, University of Mindanao Tagum, Universidad de Zamboanga, Xavier University and MSU.

MANILA-BORACAY RACE: Swiss-flag skippered by Jan Arnoldis and with an all-Filipino crew, nears Boracay Island on the way to topping the IRC B Division of the record 204-mile Manila-Boracay race. Arnoldis's Beneteau 50s 7 belies its size matched its 2006 victory in beating Martin Raiz's Chubasqui and Sunderay, manned by an all-Davis crew. Most yacht clubs, a 74-foot Nautor Swan design, skippered by Frank Pang of Hong Kong, took line honors anyway over the Brandon Chua-led Enigma. Jalla navigated the route in a record 19 hours and 8 seconds, breaking its previous record set in 2004 of 1 P.M.

Coaches to get SEAG bonus Friday

By Jun Navarro

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

Coaches, whose athletes won medals in the recent Southeast Asian Games, will finally get their well-deserved bonuses this Friday, Philippine Sports Commission chief William Ramirez announced yesterday.

Ramirez said the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. is set to release the amounts of P4.85 million, which represents the incentives for coaches as mandated by Republic Act 9064.

The national athletes, who won 41 gold medals, 91 silvers and 95 bronzes for the country in the 24th SEA Games held in Thailand three months ago, received their incentive amounting to P13,202,440 a week before Christmas last year.

Known as the Sports Incentive Act, RA 9064 rewards P1.85,000 for gold medalists in the SEA Games, P60,000 for silver and P30,000 for bronze medal performers.

The coaches are rewarded also based on the color of medals won by their athletes.

"It's been long overdue, but I'm glad the coaches will finally receive their incentives," said Ramirez.

Taiwan's Hengta nine overpowers Cebuana, snares Pangaea Cup

By Rainier S. Aurelio

CEBUANA DRIVE SQUAD HING. ton Distributor Philippines side Taiwan Distiller in a swindle last th of home runs, 40-23, on Sunday to bag the 15th PANGAEA Cup Super Division championship at the Alabang Country Club pitch.

The 9-man Hengta Taiwanese set the tone of the match by scoring seven runs in the first inning against a Cebuana Distiller squad that made it to the championship match by stunning defending champion Tong Hua-li.

The Taiwanese added eight more runs in the second inning to coast to their first double-digit lead, 15-2.

Hengta, winner of the tough 6th President's Cup slow-pitch tournament in Taipei last year, dropped its defenses only as the top of the fourth inning when the Filipinos scored six runs to draw to 12-10.

A 12-run attack by the powerhitting Taiwanese at the bottom of the inning, however, put the outcome of the game beyond doubt, 24-12.

"We gave it our best shot, but you saw how strong the Chinese team is," said Cebuana Distiller playing-manager Ken Angel. "Hengta was like a hitting machine."

The Filipinos rewarded themselves with individual awards, including the tournament's Best Slugger and Home Run King for Mark Summers, who finished with 10 homers.

April Rosales, Dante Doubleare, Jasper Cabrera, and Bob Martinez also shone for Cebuana Distiller in the three-day tournament.

In the other divisions, Hong Kong's Yuhwa team blasted Malaka Sluggers, 12-1, to clinch the A Division championship and was crowned Imran Tigers of Dynamite-whipped Singapore's Oyster Bars, 11-4, to claim the Club championship.

Hengta also beat Cebuana Distiller, 40-11, in the elimination round.

It was Tong Hua-li, however, that swept the round with a 5-0 win last round, followed by sister team Tong Hua-Cai 4-1.

In the playoffs, fourth-ranked Cebuana Distiller shocked Tong Hua-li, 11-4 while Hengta overwhelmed Tong Hua-C 18-8 to avenge the title-round loss.

"It's our first time in the tournament and no one expected us to win," said Rosales, the batter-runner player of his squad which is based in Ice Bulbo, Laguna.

Pool veteran Dy turns back hands of time

FIFTY-THREE-YEAR old Hakeem "Abet Boy" Dy proved he still has what it takes to become a star in local pool as he swept his way to the second leg championship of the Search for the New Billiards 500 Nite-day night at Beggy's [illegible]

DY: Billiards idol

[illegible] pa ako ng pagkakataon na makibaka at magbigay ng aliw sa mga tagahanga ng billiards at sumikat [illegible] sabi ng idolo sa billiards.

He won P150,000 and an Odessa Boyes trophy.

Before making it to the title match, Dy beat Robert Nying (7-2), Jun Ig Arnillado (7-6), Jun Ig Arnillado (7-3), Danny Reyes (7-1) and Japan-based Raul Yu (7-2).

Against Tanauan, he took six of the last seven racks to claim the crown.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carvin S. Mariano

Tell us your feedback: Inquire by text/e-mail by Philippine Star (Smart) or Globe (Sun) E-mail: business@inquirer.com.ph

Delay in corporate income tax cut looms

Congress wants relief for individual taxpayers instead

By Michelle V. Ramos

LEGISLATORS WANT TO defer the scheduled cut next year in the corporate income tax rate to 30 percent from 35 percent.

Members of the House committee on ways and means instead want to provide additional tax relief to individual taxpayers.

Since the government would lose potential revenues from the scheduled reduction in the corporate income tax rate, it might as well lose tax collection from the granting of additional relief to individuals, they said.

Rep. Exequiel Javier, chair of the House ways and means committee, proposed during a congressional hearing last week that the committee file a bill that would postpone the reduction to the corporate income tax, which was to start in 2009.

The proposed bill will also reinstate

(BILMT) B4

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Gov't rejects all T-bill bids

FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE AUCtion, the government rejected all bids for treasury bills yesterday, saying yields sought by banks were unreasonably high and underlined lackluster appetite for short-term securities.

For the bellwether 91-day bills, it was the third consecutive auction that all bids were rejected.

"We find the bids very unreasonable, so we decided to reject them. We don't think the banks were serious in their bids anyway," Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan said in a briefing after the auction.

Had the Bureau of the Treasury accepted bids for the 91-day bills, the rate for the three-month paper would have reached 6.995 percent, 128.6 basis points higher than the previously recorded rate of 5.693 percent. (One percentage point is equivalent to 100 basis points.)

The 182-day bills would have fetched 5.613 percent, or 99.7 basis points higher than the latest rate of 6.675 percent, and the rate for the 364-day bills would have reached 6.041 percent, 77.3 basis points higher than the 5.268 percent recorded previously.

Tan said weak appetite for short-term government securities could be brought by available investment instruments that offered higher yields.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas recently offers a special deposit account for banks at interest rates that are higher than treasury bill rates.

Lack of appetite for the treasury bills was shown in the low amount of bids. Tenders for the 91-day bills amounted to only P5.01 billion compared with the government's debt offering of P15.5 billion. Michelle V. Ramos

Shares close 1.6% lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.6 PERCENT lower yesterday in line with other Asian markets rattled by heavy losses on Wall Street at the end of last week, dealers said.

The composite index shed 60 points to 3,679.80. It neared between 3,663.11 and 3,729.98. A total of 168.1 million shares worth P2.8 billion changed hands.

Decliners outpaced gainers 67 to 28, while 40 stocks ended flat.

The broader all-share index shed 24.26 points to 1,2 percent at 1,898.26.

The benchmark composite index was in negative territory throughout the session as investors also trotted about scooping up private and domestic political uncertainty.

"The market's inability to decouple from markets abroad is evident. The bad news on Wall Street created jitters," said Jose Perez, research director at AB Capital Securities.

On Friday the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 315.78 points or 2.5 percent to 12,266.39, amid disappointing quarterly results from blue chips.

Oil prices meanwhile stayed above $100 a barrel in Asian trading yesterday ahead of an Opec meeting in which the cartel is expected to maintain current output levels. AFP

BSP reports ₱546B in special deposit accounts placement

Banks find bond rates too low

By Doris C. Dumlao

MONEY PLACED IN THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' high-yielding special deposit accounts (SDA) hit a new high ₱546.25 billion as of Feb. 8 as banks dumped low-yielding government securities and locked up more of their excess cash in the BSP's vault.

The amount is more than double the ₱233.65 billion snapped up by the BSP on its overnight borrowing tool in the same period.

Since the rates governing the BSP's special deposit accounts (SDAs) were adjusted and approved in May last year, placements of banks have dramatically increased.

"Your money that hasn't been earning much is now placed with the BSP and you're getting more than any other fixed income instruments. Some noted that mutual funds only earn in SDAs or those affiliated with banks outperformed other fixed income-based mutual funds in 2007.

Dealers noted a slowdown in SDA placements last November and December due mainly to a yearend window dressing. They noted that the dramatic surge was expanding while the rapidly with over ₱1 trillion in monthly remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

"Banks wanted to show more resources in their end-2007 balance sheet, so they pulled more money out of SDAs temporarily," a dealer-banker said.

Rates of varying maturity—from overnight to as long as six months—offer a premium of 2 to 1.5 percentage over the BSP's overnight borrowing rate of 5 percent, bankers noted.

Government bonds of the same tenor pale in comparison. In January, for instance, the 10-year treasury bond yield was 1.0 basis point above the SDA rates, allowing banks to swap viable equivalent to long-term investments for their short-term placement.

The national government auctioned off at the primary market 10-year T-bonds at an average of 5.465 percent last January. Yields on the 20-year T-bonds soared in 2008 averaged 8.06 percent and down to a record in 2007, averaged even much higher at 11.88 percent.

The SDA rates were extended last year as the BSP sees the need for a more powerful tool to drain down the robust growth in broad money supply, which rose then growing by more than 20 percent—the limit set to maintain a benign inflation environment.

Under the new rules, even banks' trust departments and non-bank quasi-corporations can place money in the SDAs. To make the SDAs more attractive, the BSP has likewise made them non-assets eligible as compliance to the 20 percent minimum liquidity requirement on banks, or the portion of deposits and deposit substitutes required to be held in the form of cash vaults and treasury-like securities.

Invitation for

Expression of Interest

Private Sector Participation for

Power Generation in the Island of Basilan

(MPC – SPUG)

Edgar Saruela

Julie Bugking

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GSMI declares dividend

By Norma P. Dominguez

GHEERA ARI ABDUL RAC, yesterday said it had declared a cash dividend of ₱0.20 per share, payable on April 7 to stockholders of record as of March 28.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, GSMI chief information officer Ferdinand K. Constantino said Gaisano's board of directors approved this in a meeting yesterday.

Constantino added that the company's stock and transfer books would be closed from March 20 to March 28.

Gaisano stands in the manufacturing and sale of alcohol and alcoholic beverages. GSMI is one of the subsidiaries of San Miguel Corp. that is entitled to the beneficiaries—the other two being food manufacturer San Miguel Purefoods Co. Inc. and real estate developer San Miguel Properties Inc.

Company data showed that GSMI has a total of 333,791,120 shares divided among 720 owners shareholders, with SMC holding 249,750,380 shares or 75.6 percent of GSMI.

Aside from the three liquor bottling plants that GSMI operates in Cebu, Pangasinan and Laguna, the company also taps two manufacturing partners to produce liquor products in Laguna and Lucena City in Quezon.

The company's best known products are Gilmore Dry, San Miguel and GSM Blue, Ron Mercador Brandy and Vino Kulafu.

GSMI is also engaged in the sale of mineral water and bottled juice.

Capital seen

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Expand to Europe, RP outsourcing firms urged

By Rainier W. Dominguez

A LONDON-BASED ADVISORY FIRM HAS urged local business process outsourcing companies to focus on the European market amid the continued decline of the US dollar.

David Barrett, founder and chief executive of PriceWaterCoopers, said the European market was rapidly emerging as a better venue for local BPO firms compared to North America.

PriceWaterCoopers is engaged in outsourcing transactions, providing a link between customers and BPO suppliers.

"The European market is now significantly larger than that in North America and is growing fast," Barrett said.

"The United Kingdom alone represents a fifth of the world market and Philippine companies would have the advantage of language and legal system there," Barrett added.

Barrett, who attended the recently held e-Services Global Outsourcing Conference, said European firms, especially in the United Kingdom, outsource a good number of their operations.

He said 44 percent of European companies outsource all or some of their IT requirements as well as more than half of their financial services.

Barrett, who is also a founding member of the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals, noted that the IBM National Outsourcing Association last year voted the Philippines as "Best Offshoring Destination."

The "clearly excellent fear with the growing dynamism in IT-outsourcing market, the Philippines has a lot to gain if they play their cards right, especially since the US dollar is steadily going downhill," he said.

Local BPO firms clinched $68 million worth of revenues through partnerships and deals during the two-day e-Services Global Sourcing Conference held in Pasay City.

According to event organizer Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, this year's e-Services hosted a record number of attendance from local and foreign buyers, including at least 146 exhibitors.

The domestic BPO sector revenues reached $8.9 billion in 2007 and the industry hopes this would grow to $7 billion by the end of the year.

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Chicken exports to fly, DA says

By Amy R. Remo

THE BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY EXpects chicken exports to Japan to increase by 25 percent to 8 million kilos this year, boosted partly by a projected 20-percent increase in local production.

Last year, exports to Japan reached 6 million kilos.

In a briefing, BAI Director Lorenzo Carbajosa said the Philippines could actually export to more countries, but the broiler industry was hampered by the increasing cost of production.

"Even with the current glut in the supply of chicken and eggs, the industry would rather subsist because of the ambivalence to high prices of animal feeds," Carbajosa explained.

Carbajosa added that with high prices of feeds stalling production more expensive, exporters could not make Philippine chicken products competitive in the global market.

Feeds and feed ingredients constitute about 65 percent of a raiser's total production cost.

BAI estimates that it costs about P85 to produce a kilo of chicken, which is almost equal to the selling price at the farm gate of P89 a kilo for live broiler.

"We must make an effort to bring down production costs to enable our raisers to export at a profit. We should also invest in research and development to explore alternative sources of feeds," Carbajosa urged.

The likewise stressed the need for research on animal diseases, vaccines and genetics to give the local industry an edge over its counterparts in other countries.

According to Carbajosa, Brine from Abu Dhabi last year barred plans to import at least two containers each of chicken every week from the Philippines.

"But these Brine offered a low price which our exporters could not afford to give, due to high production costs in the country. Prices of Philippine corn alone are more expensive compared to other countries," he said.

Currently, the country exports fresh and frozen chicken to Japan, as well as live, dry-aid chicks to Malaysia and Brunei.

Further, the United Broiler Raisers' Association (UBRA) said it expects a hefty 15 to 20 percent growth for the broiler industry this year.

Ubra lamented, however, that high production costs could pull back this growth estimate, as high costs would force some backyard raisers to stop raising chickens.

Last year, the poultry subsector, which accounted for 14.02 percent of the total agricultural output, recorded a 6.31 percent growth.

The gross value of poultry production amounted to P137.7 billion at current prices.

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DA to seal $250M in fruit deals

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY ARTHUR C. Yap said he expects to forge some $250 million worth of fruit export deals with US firms during a seminar-and-trade mission delegation to Washington this week.

Yap said in a briefing that these deals would assure agricultural goods such as fruits, including pineapples and bananas, as well as fisheries products. These goods can either be fresh, frozen or processed.

The trip, he said, also aims to expand existing markets and tap new outlets in the United States for Philippine farm products.

The United States, which remains the Philippines' top economic partner in both trade and investments, is the top destination for local agricultural commodities.

While US is the country's second largest source of imports, it is also the top buyer of the Philippines' coconut (copra) oil, desiccated coconuts, preserved pineapples, dried mango and mango juice, cantaloupe and bran.

Currently, the Philippines is allowed to export mangoes from provinces aside from Guimaras, but only to US territories Guam and Hawaii.

The Philippines has yet to meet stringent phytosanitary requirements in exporting mangoes from Oceania-Del Sur and Luzon to the US mainland, Australia and other countries.

As for bananas, the US Department of Agriculture has assured Manila of the speedy processing of the fruit's pest risk analysis—a move that could allow the entry of Philippine bananas to the US and boost the country's export earnings by $6 million a year.

More importantly, Yap said the trip might also pave the way for new and increased investments in local biofuel production.

"We will try to convince and bring in foreign biofuel investors in the economy," he said.

Bayas in the United States that went for the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference in Washington DC.

The Philippines has already logged a number of biofuel investments from foreign firms, some of which have already started construction and development.

Recently, the Department of Agriculture inked separate agreements with two Spain-based biofuel companies planning to develop 150,000 hectares of land into jatropha and cassava plantations for ethanol production.

Iberian Transformators S.A., a global trade's feedstock company, said it planned to invest $200 million in the Philippines to develop at least 100,000 hectares of land into jatropha plantations.

Abengoa Bioenergy, which operates biofuel-related facilities in Europe, Brazil and the United States, also said it would invest as much as $200 million to develop some 50,000 hectares of land planted to cassava as feedstock for biofuel facilities. Amy R. Remo

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Nido to drill offshore Palawan oil well in Q3

By Abigail L. Ho

AHEAD OF FIRST OIL FROM THE Galoc service contract in which it has a 22.26-percent stake, Australian firm Nido Petroleum Ltd. plans to drill a well within Service Contract 54 in offshore northwest Palawan by the third quarter.

"In a presentation posted on the company's official website, Nido said the well drilling schedule, initially set for the third or fourth quarter, would depend on rig availability.

Nido and contract partners Vitality Energy Ltd. have started doing preliminary planning for the drilling of the well.

This formed part of Nido Phase 2 of the service contract, which entailed a minimum financial commitment of $6 million and a well drilling date was due before February 2009.

The company recently completed surveys that formed its forward seismic acquisition campaign in Galoc—spanning a combined total of 5,475 kilometers of 2D and 826 square kilometers of 3D seismic data—which included data for SC 54.

More than 20 leads had been identified within SC 54, Nido said, all defined by 3D seismic.

Initial estimates showed prelimary oil in place of about 450 million barrels.

"The Coren North structure has been mentioned in a technically robust prospect, confirming its potential as a future drilling candidate. Although further technical and commercial assessment is required before the prospect is fully mature, preliminary oil in place is estimated at up to 450 million barrels," Nido chair David Whalley had earlier said.

"Future work will focus on Nido Directors' forecast development based on the final 3D processed data set expected in the third quarter," he added.

Apart from the Coren North Prospect, the 3D seismic data revealed that shallow waters on the eastern part of SC 54 could mean drilling opportunities that would not cost the company too much money to pursue, but would garner sizeable cash flow.

Nido plans to drill two to three wells a year over the next five years in its three contract areas—SC 54, 58 and 63—all in offshore northwest Palawan.

The company is allocating its share from the Galoc field to develop other oil and gas prospects in these three contract areas.

Nido, together with other SC 54 shareholders, are now awaiting final word from the Galoc oil field. This is scheduled to be drawn between March 29 and April 16.

Initial reserve estimate: 450M barrels

Inflation comes to the fore

A 80-YEAR-OLD WOMAN HAD A heart attack and was taken to the nearest hospital. While on the operating table, she had a near-death experience. Seeing God, she asked, "Is my time up?" God said, "No, you have another 30 year to live." Upon recovery, the woman decided to stay in hospital and make herself look beautiful. So she had a face lift, liposuction, breast implants and a tummy tuck. A plastic surgeon removed her wrinkles and she had her hair dyed blonde. Soon she had so much more time to live, she figured to make the most of it. After the last operation, she was released from the hospital but on the way home, while crossing the street, she was killed by an ambulance. Arriving in heaven, she demanded to see God. "You said I had another 30 years. Why didn't you pull me out of the path of the ambulance?" "I sure was," said God. "I didn't recognize you."

A bishop attended the rally in Makati disguised as a worker. As it happened, he came face to face with Cory. She looked at him puzzled and said, "I am sure I know you. I can't remember your name but the faith is familiar."

I have just finished reading "Men are from Mars. Women are from Venus." The differences between the sexes are so all-embracing that I have come to the conclusion that the only marriages that can succeed are gay marriages.

* * *

Last week, I reported in detail the gist of what Bernanke and Paulson had testified before the House Senate Banking Committee. Last week, by appearing equally alarmed, I reported the message that the rules to the downside of the economy had increased and that the FED would take all steps necessary to avert a recession. Traders are now betting that the FED will cut another half point or even three-quarter point when it meets again in March.

There was, however, one difference and that was that he was concerned about the effect of inflation if the price of oil kept rising. He did not expect this to happen and anticipated that oil would fall back to $90, in which case inflation would slow as the economy slowed. In January, the producers price index rose by 1 percent and the core PPI, which excludes food and energy by 0.4 percent. The PPI has risen 7.3 percent year-on-year, the highest since 1981. The consumer price index rose 0.4 percent in one month, far above the FED's comfort zone of 1 to 2 percent a year.

Another alarming feature is the rise in M3, the money supply. Usually, this is fairly steady at around 5 percent but in the past 6 months, it has surged to 13 percent and looks set to go higher. What this means is that the government, unable to fund its huge trade deficit, has created paper oil and the war in Iraq is simply printing money at an alarming rate. The last time M3 reached this level was in 1971 under President Nixon and this was followed by a severe recession. Zimbabwe, here we come.

The fact that the Treasury is printing money as it is even playing Monopoly is why nobody wants to hold the currency. Open keep increasing the price of oil merely to maintain its $bpd value and investors are switching into gold, which is approaching $1000, an event that shocked me when I first drew breath but is a cheap trade by comparison. Inflation is now the problem, not the solution.

If being caffeinated aggressive, runs at 3 percent or less, he probably can stop the rot temporarily so that a recovery in the second half is quite likely. The problem will come in 2009 if by then, because of accelerating inflation due to low interest rates and a flood of money, the Fed chair will have to raise rates back up to 5 percent or thereabouts. This will drive up mortgage repayments and cause all the defaults it sort up over again.

It will also increase the cost of doing business and consumer prices will rise so workers will be forced to demand higher wages in order to survive. Some will be lucky: others will lose their jobs. The dollar will recover temporarily and this will help exports such as oil but it will also reduce US competitiveness abroad and increase the cost of imports. This will be passed on to the consumer who will find it increasingly difficult to survive, unemployment will rise and a major recession is likely. Pulling out of long would also threaten the economies to some extent, as it would save $100 billion a year.

Turning to more immediate problems, AIG, the world's largest insurer reported a loss of $5.3 billion for 2007, its first in 2005, the company's net rate was immediately raised from 22 to 35 percent, with a provision that this would be lowered to 30 percent by 2009.

The cut in the corporate income tax rate is supposed to be a move cut to eventually ease the burden of corporate entities caused by the implementation of the expanded VAT law.

Aside from changing the rate of the corporate income tax, increasing the coverage of the value-added tax and raising the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent were also part of the new VAT law

Mr. Bearbull

Ron Nathan

Delay in corporate income tax cut looms

From page B1

a provision allowing each member of a married couple to deduct P75,000 from their taxable income. Currently, only one member is allowed to use the deductible amount for tax payment purposes.

An official from the Department of Finance who attended the last week's hearing, which included several tax-related concerns, said the government agency did not find anything to oppose about the proposed deferral to the cut in the corporate income tax rate.

The DOF official said that since both proposals would negatively impact on government revenues anyway, choosing to grant additional tax relief to individuals rather than ease the tax burden of corporate entities might be preferable.

The official requested anonymity, as the DOF position is supposed to be announced by the President.

Aiming to woo lawmakers' positions, AIG, the world's largest insurer reported a loss of $5.3 billion

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

First Filipina to run across US

By Martha Medina
Photos courtesy of Joy Rojas
Contributor

After traversing the Philippines by foot in 2005, Joy Rojas will cross 12 states

AS A FIRST IMPRESSION, one would never expect that this seemingly delicate and handsomely tanned woman is actually a mom and determined marathoner bent to run greeting long distances.

So tough is Joy Rojas and unbending of will that in 2005, she went on leave from a desk job in publishing, got a one-way ticket to Davao City courtesy of Cebu Pacific, and resolved to traverse the Philippines—by foot.

Calling her project and history-run "Habilong Pasugong," Rojas earned the distinction of being the first woman to run across the Philippines, from Davao City to Sagada, Benguet, in 46 days. She would inevitably end up sleeping in local public schools for her grueling rides, in turn, gave inspirational talks to high-school kids on the importance of setting a dream for themselves and pursuing it.

Three years later, she is at it again.

And this time, Rojas is going for the mother lode—to run across the United States. She explains, "Running across the Philippines was a good experience—a unique time—but I'd like to try to replicate. And if I were to choose a location, why not go all the way and do it in the US?"

Such a decision comes at a most appropriate time when the spirit and faith of Filipinos are deeply challenged by current national and political events. Through her run, Rojas aims to connect with Filipino communities in the US, addressing the strong cohesiveness of Filipinos as manifested in the world's strongest suits.

Four-month project

Of the several hundreds who have run across America, 11 are women and one is a Filipino: Cesar Garcia, owner of the sportswear company Bobik, who negotiated from York to California on foot in the mid-1980s.

Rojas' run across America, called "Habilong Pasugong," will have her covering 12 states: California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. She will be joined by Mateo Morales, an active figure in the local running circuit who was also part of the Team Philippines team.

Spanning an estimated 5,000 km, "Habilong Pasugong" will have Rojas covering an average of 50 km a day; rest days are scheduled in the four-month long project.

Coordination will schedule visits to Filipino communities along the route, which the team will meet upon reaching their destination. So much the more was Rojas spoke before various audiences in the Philippines after

Want to run, too?

Here's how to get started

GET YOUR DOCTOR'S approval. Especially if you've never exercised before or in a while, or have a preexisting health condition.

Invest in the right gear. Which brand of running shoes is your call, but remember to pick a pair that offers comfortable cushioning and is at least a half size larger.

Most people use dentures before reaching age 40 due to gum problems

Having healthy gums reduce risk of plaque build-up, dental caries and hypersensitivity.

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SMART

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Ginger's fashion spice and everything nice

THE ADORABLE Ong family. Pretty Ginger Ong with loving parents, fashion designer Johnny Ong and entrepreneur Grace Q., and son Jeffrey

GINGER with her gang, Nicky Chua, Bea Requena and Catherine Uriarte. Standing: Nicholas Ng, Ginger, Johnson Yu, Rico Tan and Johanna Kho

PRETTY YOUNG MISS WITH THE Midas Touch (as in luxury brands, investing and stocks, dabbling) Ginger Ong, one of the few Filipino Chinese students at New York City's Fitted Fashion Institute of Technology, is now closer to fulfilling her lifelong dream of becoming a fashion designer.

The 20-year-old daughter of business magnate Jerry G. and the beautiful Andrea Ong-Sotelo Ong recently jetted back to Manila for a break from her hectic school schedule there.

Just like her grand debut in 2006, Ginger's homecoming was a break affair held at their Greenhills residence, with an exclusively prepared 14-course dinner (a la haute style, passport and flowing wine, while the fun pack of invitees enjoyed the romantic rendition of the De La Salle University Pops Orchestra.

Also was told that aside from school, this amazing fashion designer also managed to get party scoops from some of the city's prestigious fashion shows, nabbed offcuts with the fashion elite, and did volunteer work for Dolce & Gabbana, Valentino, Carolina Herrera, Christian Siriano, Vera Wang, Fred Hoets, Lily Saw and Tweeden's London during the NY Fashion Week, dahlings.

She met fashion guru and TV personality Tim Gunn during her volunteer stint for Season 4 of "Project Runway" last year, and was also involved in the Emmy Awards preview-ing process.

In Manila, she took an internship course under acclaimed designer Larry Espinosa, doing bridal and evening gowns, and with Preview Magazine as well. And she was also a dean's lister!

This month, Ginger is booked for an internship stint with RCBC Max Amin, one of New York's famous brands. And come summer, she will train fashion houses in London, this is said truly with his adorable family.

Hey, ain't it great to be young, absolutely beautiful, totally brilliant and definitely privileged, palengke?

Bling-bling card

In today's fast, fast world, our life is ruled by all sorts of cards. Swipe-based cards to credit cards and, now the bling-bling card, dahlings. RCBC Diamond Mastercard...also first luxury fully platinum credit card for women—was launched during the recent Mega Fashion Awards.

The Diamond Card carries tons of features that are perfect for the needs of women of style. These include zero interest for beauty and wellness products and services within the first three months of card issuance, unlimited dozen of rewards, and the unique Diamond Cents program in which P0.25 will be automatically donated to Central Philippine, a program for underprivileged children, for every P1,000 transaction.

Every girl's adrenaline level shot up during the launch when RCBC Bankard rolled off an awesome multifaceted diamond ring, which was won by the dazzling Anne Curtis.

The entertainment industry's answer to "it girl" was also named "the Most Redoubtable Female Celebrity" of the night.

Grand Opening

RCBC Bankard's hottest executives were in full elegant force, palengke, headed by president and CEO Oscar Reyes and darling Peng Reyes.

Mall opening

He went on not way to Shangri-la's the first time for the grand opening of the two-room New York-style Modern Steak Grill when someone asked what Tollhouse meant to dahlings.

Well, it took my pal Pepper Rodrigues only three minutes to exclaim, "It's Triangle in North Manila!"

There for the grand opening of the latest complex in the ever-expanding Ayala Malls, palengke, were no less than Her Excellency Ambassador Macapagal-Arroyo, joined by the Vice President Noli "Kabayan" de Castro, MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando, Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, Ayala Land Inc. chair Fernando Zobel de Ayala, Ayala Land Inc. president Bonnie G. Ayala, and The Landmark's Teddy Sang.

The event was also graced Tollhouse namesakes: Jorge and Filipina Hwang of Beer; brilliant newsbreaking celeb Ben Chan of Bench, scarf; Toby's Bobby and Toby Chua-dio; Ronald Pineda of Folded & Hung; Mr. and Mrs. Mendoza Cua of The Five; Joseph Uy of Adidas; and Rafael Prieto of Timberland, among tons of others like them, palengke.

For entertainment, presenting newcomer Nyko Mesa serenaded the audience at the Tollhouse Bar, while Arlie Prats, Vladimir Magdaluyo and Rayven Cruz, together with newcomer group Rodrigo and The Monuments, lasted their mettle for the up-planting crowd.

The grand finale was the powerful performance at the Tollhouse Activity Center by the gorgeous, talented Ina Feo Pudilla, as host, and daughter Kaeylie, who were backed up by little amazing voices from various church groups.

And, not to be missed, check out the new The Landmark Department Store and its awesome The Landmark Supermarket at Tollhouse. Wow!

BEATRICE Lee

TYRONE Tang, DLSU-Industrial Economics student, and girlfriend Gaisy Sy

GODMOTHER Monica Lim and Jose Concepcion

SINGER with Christina Lim and TV personality Tim Gunn in New York

GODMOTHER Aida Calasanz, Jim Mabi, ex-PBCom and Toby Mabi

MASTER BLADE cutest manager Paolo Villa-Real and RCBC Bankard Vice-chairman and CEO Oscar Reyes

VIBES! Romeo, Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, Vice President Noli de Castro, President Macapagal-Arroyo, Ayala Land Inc. chair Fernando Zobel de Ayala and Ayala Land president Jaime Ayala at the Tollhouse launch

MING Reyes of RCBC Bankard card Gail Tiu, vice-chairman of Mega Publishing

POWER couple Joey and Marites Concepcion

BEAUTIFUL couple Raul Francisco and wife Joanna Prieto-Ibe

DAZZLING Anne Curtis and the elegant diamond ring unveiled by RCBC

ABT Bautista, Judith Zaymis of Market Cat II, Paola's daughter, Ivana Tayle and Ayi Pudill of RCBC Bankard

STELLE Malls Group VP for business development and support services Tess Polera, Ayala Malls Group VP for finance Cora Dizon, Cristina Elizalde and head of operations established malls Myrna Fernandez

M.A. Cariz and mom Maria Rodriguez

Yoga in the wild

By Linda "Lily" Pilo
Contributor

AFTER 24 YEARS OF TENURE TO an import business and raising two children, I have opted to spend the rest of my life in simple abundance.

It all came together quite naturally—my intense training in yoga courses for more than two decades, and the inherent love I have for the natural world.

This meant leaving Boston, Massachusetts, and moving to a remote little town in New Hampshire, in a cottage which has been my weekend home of 10 years.

Long Pond, fortunately, is a bit of paradise on earth. Here I am surrounded by crystal clear waters of a spring-fed lake, ancient granite boulders, hills/acres of preserved old forests, magnificent sunrises and sunsets and clear blue skies that light up with the galaxies at night.

YOGA! High on a limb

Spaces and silences

Long walks in the woods keep my senses stimulated. And even as I go about my home chores—digging in the garden, mowing rocks for walkways and borders, feeding logs to my wood stove when the weather gets chilly—I am in constant focus on the rhythm of my breath, allowing softly as I give in to gravity, and exhaling vigorously, defying gravity, to move with grace and conserve my energy.

In my daily yoga, I explore the spaces and silences in and around me, to find the strength and balance in my yoga asanas, with inner waiting any muscular effort. It is a method I learned from Angela Farmer in Grosse Isle in the early '80s. Here my teachers are the animals, especially my black panther Abe our Tyson. I am in constant awe of his many beautiful movements...agile and light, yet so powerfully grounded.

Island haven

From Antioquia to Bicol, I conduct animal yoga workshops in El Nido, Palawan, Philippines, where I live four months in a year. I have built a yoga house overlooking the sea. My consultant and co-owner Lucy Tiangco and I dream of having an island haven for retreats in mind of rejuvenation.

"Hatha" (Filipino for "spilling out"), as we have come to call our home, embodies the philosophy behind my lifetime process of integrated healing. It is only in emptying out, in releasing old habits of physical and mental patterns, that we can begin to be renewed.

This is what yoga is all about—not so much about learning the moves (poses) but more about learning who we really are, and once again, the natural beauty of nature is the setting for inner healing.

Dancels

The rhythm and sensations find their way by osmosis to my yoga classes for the organic stay yoga hall, the cabin winds come sweeping down from the limestone cliffs. All around are bird sounds, monkeys bickering, squirrels running up the trees with their bushy tails, and the incessant wind whining in dance from the neighborly gecko.

"Let go your backs, with your eyes closed." I start off the emptying out process.

Feel the caress of the ocean breeze on your skin and let that relax you. You are floating in the warm waters. Drop every muscle, every bone and every cell of your body back to the ocean floor. With your navel store and easy exhalation, you will feel a floating rising sensation in your chest, lifting up like the wind. Feel the connection between your back belly dropping, and your chest rising like the morning star. Gather the limb of the heart and, from this strong point, spread open your wings like the green eagle. Awaken the back body and feel the tingling in your spine as it swells around in all directions..."

I look forward to the weeklong workshops in El Nido this coming March 2008. By the time I am settled in Palawan, swap from Straw Hampshire, I invariably welcome the chill from lake to ocean, from winter to tropical heat.

The raw beauty and wildness of El Nido ground the soft yet powerful yoga experience. Evolving comes easily. The mind gets quiet and becomes receptive to self healing.

E-mail the author at talkbuu@gmail.com or visit www.talkbuu.com

THIS is what yoga is all about—not so much about learning the moves (poses) but more about learning who we really are, and our place in nature.

First Filipina to run. . .

From page B1

JOY ROJAS and running partner Mia Macabe

roads, no roads, hurdles, even a nasty acid or injury are no excuse to stop or not start getting to where you're going, which is usually about nine to 11 hours away depending on your pace and what you encountered during the day."

Since then, the runner has added more accomplishments to her resume. In September 2006, Rojas ran 160 km from the 0 km marker in Luneta, Manila to the 100 km marker in Binangbang, Batangas in 16 hours.

In February 2007, she covered the rough but scenic route from Baguio to Bauang in three glorious days. She reveals, "For obvious reasons, the one across the Philippines remains a sentimental favorite. The thought of it makes me smile."

Reserved but thorough

Joy has always been a very low key person. Among people in the publishing business, she has always been known to be a reserved but thorough writer and writer.

How reminiscent this woman is shy away from media interviews to talk about her feat. For Rojas, however, what matters here to me isn't self glory but the chance to see the world through a simple and almost spiritual manner.

"It's running for me," she has said, "is about meditation, reflection and prayer."

She may have quietly gone on from her her work and finished her self-mostly through her life savings to Hakbang Pinoy, but friends have help pass a long way. The help of sponsors this time in her eyes across the US.

To date, friends have been helping her to closely inch her way to her dream by donating an identical route to help raise the money for the plane tickets, food and lodging. Every little help goes a long way.

Adidas has also provided her with shoes and apparel, and Ayala Foundation US is accepting pledges on the project's behalf.

Sen. Gregorio Honasan has offered his valuable assistance, and 'HOPE,' Sen. Pia Cayetano (photo-journalist turned and various University of the Philippines alumni in the US have assembled to getting updates and hosting Rojas in their homes when she crosses their states. Philodon Joy Sacnanddo has volunteered to act up as informal desk for organizational and office.

Rojas' dogged determination has raised interest and inspiration in those who have already her story. And with her every step across each state, with each Filipino family that she will get to meet, she will carry with her that hope and great pride in the Filipino moment's faith, boldness, and perpetually hopeful outlook.

Call 8174477 or e-mail talkbuu@pinoyabroad.com.

Want to run, too?

From page C1

than your regular nine-to-five, so the best limit is "small" after you've been on them for some time.

Shoes are subjective. Some like them thick, others like me prefer them thin, but make sure yours allow your feet to "breathe." As for clothes, the market is filled with possibilities. I know runners who prefer the simplicity of cycling shorts and the freedom of a skimpy sports bra. Personally, I prefer traditional runner's shorts and a basic, sleeveless top.

Walk before you run. Friends who've tried running tend to quit after a few attempts because they find it so tiring and boring. To build endurance, limit the patience to last long hours or distanced, start by walking. When walking gets too easy, alternate it with a light jog. And when that becomes a stitch, jog longer than you walk, as if you find yourself jogging, and eventually running all the way.

Warm up and cool down. Light stretching exercises are a good way to begin and end a run. Also, remember to pace yourself. Start slowly before you gain speed, and ease into a jog after a fast, finishing kick.

Eat and drink like a runner. Loading up on carbohydrates isn't the only way. Runners need protein to rebuild muscles, and water and sports drinks to replenish fluids and electrolytes lost through sweat.

Run safe. In a park, on a track or inside a private subdivision are the soundest places to run because you don't have to worry about traffic. But if you're like me and find fulfillment when you're pounding pavement, make sure you run against traffic and on the side (not center) of the road.

Plug into your iPod. If you're on a solo place like a park or track, otherwise, it's always best to run minus music so you can hear the likes of car horns or the hum of oncoming vehicles. And regardless of the time of day you run, wear white or bright colors, or clothing with reflectors, so drivers can easily see you.

Run with a friend. Or a group of friends so they not only offer safety but great motivation as well for days when you're less or go at it alone.

Have a good time. So what if you don't run fast or win a title? Running is itself self-worthy of rewards—a resilient mind and body, lifelong friends, time for reflection and prayer, and a stronger way to take yourself places.

Joy Rojas

MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!
Take Charge Doc!
Why is stress management related to heart disease?
Nicola

Live longer, better

IF JOHNNIE EXPLODER, JOAN FORGE-the-knee-naked more than halfway across the world in search of the fountain of youth, what distance would you travel to find it? Luckily for them, they only need to cross some oceans to discover the answers to one universal question, "How can I live forever?"

Unfortunately, the explorer never found it. But you can, by chip.

Elixir of life

The importance of water recovery be overemphasized. Did you know that 20-30 percent of your daily is water? If you are dehydrated, it will be visible on your skin. Dermicist and Skincare.com spokesbody deprived of water. Oil and mineral glands slow their production by the age of 30. And your skin's ability to retain moisture is hampered. But drinking 10-12 glasses daily isn't enough. Here are some points to ponder:

Chemist acid. Bathing and washing hand in hot water dries out the skin. Try lukewarm water instead.

Eat gentler. When choosing a body soap, buy somethings gentle, not harsh. Apply cleansers that the strong alcohol. Moreover, only and cleary'd alcohol can accelerate.

Right Binding. Moisturize your face and body immediately after you shower. This is the best time as your skin is still damp and will enough to absorb moisturizers.

Happy sodium. Keep the natural hormone spot. Ending your hypertension by drinking enough water. Try about a litre(a regular enough to choose your colour (3; fresh lemon juice is one part of water make).

Skin fats. Drink water to keep fatty because it burns fat more efficiently.

Kidney cleanse. Not enough water in your body will invite the presence of crystals in your kidneys. Avoid kidney stones by drinking up on water.

Lime clean. A healthy cause is a clear pale yellow.

Blood booster. Downing several glasses is not advisable. Recommended dose is 2 glasses at any one time. But have your water bottle handy and within reach.

Put on your battle gear

See, you can see the green back. Antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables are your best defense against disease and aging. You need to begin your program in your home in order to get a head start. However, it never is too late to begin a health regimen. Load up on your beta-carotene and Vitamin C. Studies indicate that diets rich in these vitamins reduce the risk of contracting cancers. Add the following to your diet: grapefruit, kiwi, orange/lemon, pineapples and papaya and guava. Have the very powerful and current provide 12-15 milligrams of beta-carotene is natural from of Vitamin A). Double the amount, experts say, you should have.

Vitamin E can be sourced from nuts and seeds. Softened almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds are natural keys.

Eat less

According to George Roth, Ph.D., Gerontology Research Center, National Institute of Aging in Baltimore, Maryland, calories the luxury years. Eating less means lower blood pressure and cholesterol. So, watch your life by not putting the spoon in your mouth too often.

Shape up

By keeping fit, your body will respond with greater stamina and strength. Moderate exercise is beneficial to better health and a longer life. So, put on your walking shoes and start exercising.

Affirm good things

Keep your heart light. Rendering the hardest-working organ in your body with positive such as radiance, pure, expert, angel will only weaken it. Affirm "My heart sings only happy."

Health and beauty bath

Believe it or not a warm bath allows your skin to drink up. But overdoing could dry it. So, don't stay in the tub longer than 15-15 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons of virgin olive oil to skin boosting.

Reference: Age Reversing Secrets" by Kevin Nolan)

The Amazing Wellness Day and Show will be held March 8 at the Mall of Asia. Call 571-9307 or 0929-6834888.

Discovering your passion as an exerciser

By Mavic Felipe
Contributor

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT things that I've learned in life is pursuing what you are passionate about and then everything will follow.

It was explained in Brian Andreas's book "Working with Passion: How to Do What You Love for a Living" that the right fit in whatever you do, like your job, comes when the work satisfies your inner needs and then when the work that you do follows a theme that runs through your life, in whatever way you will feel satisfied.

Passion is the result of knowing exactly what you want and having the emotional strength to go after it while giving your plan enough time to come into reality. It's never too late to connect your situation and make time to focus your own inspiration. Passion is everything that you do and you will succeed just like being passionate about exercise and healthy lifestyle so you can commit to it long-term.

Explore the activities which motivate you.

If you are competitive, you might want to choose physical activities that you notice you stand out such as those which will require you constant training and preparation to win or get recognized. There can be body building events, sports, dance competitions or competitive aerobics marathons.

If you are a simple person who would feel happy just be doing the things that you love, then find activities like dance classes or simply walking with your dog.

If you are a goal-oriented person, you might get motivated to exercise even if you just do it cause by setting exercise activity goals for the day. Reaching it will literally make you feel good.

A combination of the activities mentioned can always be applied. The positive effects of exercise like improved health and morale should be made into consideration once you've started any exercise program. Results will follow from your consistent efforts and it will increase your motivation to pursue the activities long-term.

Choose activities that can help you proliferate your most needed desire-to-stay activities easily.

I have seen the benefit of exercise in my day-to-day activities. It gives me the advantages of doing various things during the day which prevents boredom and makes me look forward to another day. And I can actually catch a taxi, or a cab during the very last minute because I can always run anytime, anywhere.

If you are a housewife, a regular

Inside Out
Gary Quinton

Desecration of mystical mountain

LAST TIME, I WENT UP THE MYSTICAL Mt. Banahaw in Dolores, Quezon, once again, after more than 20 years, in response to a call for help by a descendant of Apolinar Isidro, the mountain's first known mystic and hermit.

I was accompanied by two female students, a male architect who was a frequent visitor to the mountain and a female real estate broker who had never been there but very curious about its legendary mysteries.

The original inhabitants of the mystical mountain are very concerned about these things: first, the plan of the barangay to collect fees from people going up the mountain; second, the construction of unauthorized and questionable structures; and third, the unallowed and indiscriminate cutting down of plants, herbs and trees with medicinal and/or mystical significance.

Old residents and mystics, led by Lourdes's grandaughter Estela Lourdi Abella are trying to put up a foundation that will protect the mountain from human predators and to preserve its natural features as decreed by the spirits.

Lack of strong leadership

These efforts at putting up a committee to protect from against the onslaught of modernization are stymied by lack of funds and strong leadership. This frustration has brought the voice of the husbands into the mountain.

"We are not against electrification or such," explained Edith and her followers. "But we are against putting electricity in the sacred places, because one can see longer pots and mediums in peace, which is what pilgrims come here for." They said there are so many distractions that compete for one's attention. Thus, the well-loved Kinaputol of the place could hardly be heard anymore.

The changing of a few to anyone who goes up the mountain during Holy Week has given rise to usurpers of assemblies and corruption.

"Who accounts for all the money collected? Where do they go?" These questions, according to some old residents, have not been answered satisfactorily.

Mt. Banahaw has been declared a protected National Park and is an important watershed area. But the old residents do not see the place being protected as much as it should be.

Recently, there have been irregularities and illicit activities in this area reportedly due to the presence of New People's Army rebels. But according to the residents, they have never encountered any NPA in the area. "Everybody who comes to Banahaw is here either to pray and meditate, renew his spirits, or get wonders and cleanse. But some have come to dig for treasures."

Riders were drawn and convicted effort is done but by the local and national government. The problem is of the spirits. They will come true in medium was told 15 years ago that, "when the noise of the city reaches the mountain, that will be the end of mystical Mt. Banahaw."

Estela and her followers do not wish to see the prediction come true in our time.

I recall that in the early '80s, when there were yet no concrete steps and railings leading to the five Lucia Falls, we used to hold on to ropes and roots of trees to negotiate the steps in the descent to the canyon. During wet seasons, the muddy steps become slippery, but no accident ever occurred. But with the concrete steps and nylon ropes, I was told there was recently somebody who plunged to his death when the rope to which he was hanging on broke. "The spirits of the mountain must really be angry," murmured one hiker.

The paths leading to St. Jacob's Well and some mystical places are now cemented. This makes a lot of difference in one's mood and attitude.

Whereas before, we had to be very careful and must have full concentration in negotiating the narrow and rocky paths, now we can do so with ease and even talk to our companions without danger.

The old mystics and locals of Mt. Banahaw know they can't stop the modernization of the mountain, but they are hoping that can be done with, our totally destroying the very thing that has made Mt. Banahaw the mystical and supernatural place that has attracted people to it in the first place.

Note: The next Seabreeze Retreat & Reincarnation seminar will be held March 8, 1-5 p.m., at Rm. 308 Prince Plaza 1 Condominium, 308 Legaspi St., Greenhill, Mkiko. Interested persons may call 8707245, 8026886, or 0920-9339998. E-mail [illegible]

Renowned French cosmetic surgeon at dieter clinic

DR. PIERRE CLERO, WELL-KNOWN cosmetic surgeon, will speak on the topic "Stop the Clock" at the new Dispositive Clean Up (DCE) March 6 at The Discovery Suites in Ortigas Center.

The DCE program is a scientifically integrative medicine clinic conducted by Global Vital Source Inc., an all-scientific and research enterprise.

Clero of Paris, France, who is now adviser of the Clero Clinic Inc., will talk about his own clinical principles for "rendovating" the aging process sometimes his book "Stop the Clock with the Clero Clinic Plan."

Clero notes that successful prevention and treatment of sensory diseases, along with healthy nutrition and hygienic practices, have improved human longevity.

Among the benefits of Clero's program, focused aesthetics, via improved memory and cognitive functions, focused sensory-supporting environmental remediation and focused body for deposits for overall improved body structure and posture.

Jean Gouldstein, chair of The Global Vital Source Co. Inc., says each Clero client or medical servers a particular focus like his nutrition, hypertension, lifestyle. All clients are conducted under strict medical supervision.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Edited by Ernesto G. Velarde

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Love or money?

WOULD YOU RATHER BE SUCCESSFUL in business than in love? Actor-businessman Mario Augustin answers the question and throws in some tips for budding entrepreneurs as well in Dollywood. Page D3

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THE LIMA, from Indonesia, won the first season/first year

2 Pinoy groups Malaysia-bound

Auditions yield 'quality' singers for 'Gang Starz,' a regional talent search

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

TWO FILIPINO vocal groups are bound for Kuala Lumpur to join the regional talent search, "Gang Starz"—in which contestants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are vying for a US$ 100,000 cash prize.

The news was relayed to Inquirer by Sultan Ibrahim, general manager of TV3, the show's airing station and a leading network in Malaysia.

Ibrahim acted as judge, along with two Malaysian music superstar—record producer Jazzuane and singer Dennis Ooi. (The multitude judges are not part of the show's elimination.)

MBC 5 aired the Malaysian network in screening the two-day local tryouts last week.

The absences of the members of the two Pinoy vocal groups are still conditional, pending final paper work, but Ibrahim revealed that the groups are both ours—one all-boy, the other all-girl.

The girls are former finalists in ABC 5's Philippine Idol," said Ibrahim. He added that, apart from the top two groups, two more had been selected as standby entries. "Should the first two drop out, the two others would replace them."

The standby groups consist of another all-girl trio and a boy band with the locations.

Ibrahim said he had been very impressed with the local talents. "There's a reason for. The show is all about discovering unique recording talent that could succeed regionally," he noted.

Now in its second season, "Gang Starz" had elimination trio "The Limit" in this season. "They're popular in Malaysia," Ibrahim said. "Now they're trying to break into the Indonesian market, which is tough to crack."

Record deal

Aside from the cash prize, the winning group gets a recording deal with Malaysian label HMS.

The two Pinoy groups will join its 11 Singaporean and four Thai counterparts, which begin June April.

Ibrahim admitted that he had arrived in the Philippines with certain expectations. "We had previous exposure to Filipino talents in Malaysia," he explained. "They're not big name talents, but they perform with hands in liner and shows. We simply liked the quality of talents here. At the end of the day, we were pretty satisfied."

(E-mail: bayanismedia@gmail.com)

Hairloss is wrecking her life and she doesn't know why.

Thinning hair makes a woman look older. When your hair's healthy, shine and bounce weaken, it seems your personality is likewise affected. Self-consciousness, diminished self-esteem, even bouts of depression may ensue.

Most women who have gone through this harrowing experience say they tried everything to stop hairloss, from special treatments at the salon, to a whole range of over-the-counter products. But nothing worked. Sadly, many "remedies" may have actually made the condition worse. Until they found out the reason why they were losing hair, little could be done to end the problem.

Possible reasons for hairloss.

Women's hairloss can be caused by hormonal changes. Female Pattern Baldness (or Androgenetic Alopecia) is a reaction to male hormones in the body (androgens) which can weaken a woman's hair. Other factors can be stress, poor nutrition, illnesses and reactions to certain medications, childbirth and menopause, frequent coloring, curling, straightening, and many more. Most causes of hairloss, when they are correctly identified, can be treated with good results.

Getting the facts on why you are losing hair.

Trichology is the study of the functions and problems of hair. A trichologist is extensive who has been educated in the subject and is qualified to determine the reasons why your hair is not in good health.

Where do you find a trichologist? One name that has been synonymous with Professional Trichology in the Philippines for more than 25 years, Swissotel, Swissotel trichologists will examine your hair and scalp and give you advice on what to do.

A trichologist - what does it cost?

Starting Swissotel trichologists offer an in-depth Hair & Scalp analysis totally free of charge.

Pre-hairloss symptoms.

Before you hair starts falling out, be aware of early warning signs such as persistent dandruff, flaking, and scalp irritations. Best hairloss - see a trichologist when you see these signs!

These visible indications are embarrassing, and when combined with dirt in the atmosphere, shampoo chemicals or excess softness, they can block follicles, badly affecting hair growth.

Treatments to help your hair.

Depending on the findings of your Hair & Scalp analysis, you can decide on treatment programs including:

ULTRA HAIR REINFORCER – deep cleans scalp, creates healthier environment for growth. Hair becomes thicker, shinier, more lush.

ULTRA LUSH VOLUMIZER – quickly controls and stops hair fall, helps restore original hairmass, volume and softness.

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5 JUMPER
6 VANTAGE POINT

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2 THE WATER HORSE
3 MY BIG LOVE
4 JUMPER / 27 DRESSES
5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
6 VANTAGE POINT

Proud of Filipinos in US shows

From: Daniel (dannyaalcedo@ge.com), Sydney Australia

It was great to read your story on Feb. 20 regarding Filipinos in "American Idol" and "Dance Pair." I am so proud to know that we Filipinos are making a mark everywhere. Here in Sydney, in our own version of "So You Think You Can Dance," we also have two or three Filipinos in the top 10.

More power to us!

Thanks for update

From: bagibenate-mail@gmail.com

Thanks for keeping the public updated on Mariel Jacoda, a Dualist in "Dance War"! I always log on to inquirer.net. I also emailed Dolly Anne Carvajal the day after Jacoda was involved in the show. I appreciate all the columns here in the Inquirer.

Go, Ramirez

From: Dr. Lab Ilabrador-Inocando, Washington, D.C.

I'm watching "American Idol" right now, and I'm happy that our very own Kimmie Mahilay received the best comments from the judges. Randy said she was like ayos; Paula said she was the most consistent and, hmm, said she's the one to beat all the others. Let's all pray and vote for her.

Not a Volvo

From: Lloyd Cote Ladores (lloydcote.ladores@ntt-bcc.com)

I want to comment on Jayson B. Rivera's review of the movie, "My Best Friend's Girlfriend."

I saw the film with my wife on the first day. We were even seated behind the guy who played the "almost best friend" in the movie. Yes, Eto was drinking a small Volvo Cooper, as the review said. It was an Audi. Joang may sana na bilog sa dating!

Unless Volvo and Audi are one and the same, I guess that bit of information was incorrect.

FEEDBACK

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1	2 THE FLOCK	3	4 MY BIG LOVE
GLORIETTA 4	1 THE WATER HORSE	2	3 DAN IN REAL LIFE	4 VANTAGE POINT
	5	6 MY BIG LOVE	7 THE FLOCK	
GREENBELT 1	1	2		
GREENBELT 3	1 JUMPER	2	3 VANTAGE POINT	
	4 THE WATER HORSE	5 DAN IN REAL LIFE		
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 DAN IN REAL LIFE		
AYALA CENTER CEBU	3 THE WATER HORSE	4	5 VANTAGE POINT	
	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 THE WATER HORSE	3	4 JUMPER
MARKET! MARKET!	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 THE FLOCK		
	3 JUMPER	4	5	
TRINOMA	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 VANTAGE POINT	3 MY BIG LOVE	4
	5 THE FLOCK	6 DAN IN REAL LIFE	7 THE WATER HORSE	

AT THE MALLS

Glorietta

GREENBELT

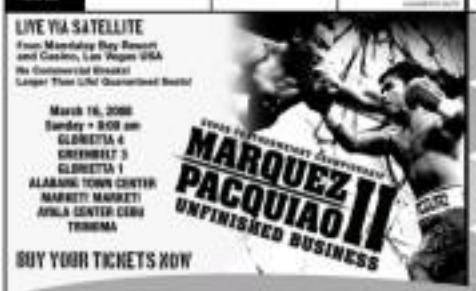
ALABANG TOWN CENTER

AYALA CENTER CEBU

MARKET! MARKET!

Ayala MUSEUM

Tri Noma



Fans should know when a star is lying

SHOW BUSINESS IS SUPPOSED TO be all glamour, but quite often, it can also be rather seamy and unsavory. Stardom has so many pitfalls that some show biz denizens are prepared to do anything and everything to acquire and maintain it, no matter who gets hurt or used.

Trouble is, quite often, the victims are the members of the entertainment audiences—and therein lie a number of cautionary tales.

The worst new trend on the tube is some fading stars' shameless effort to prop up their sagging careers or possibly a comeback project by inventing or exaggerating scandals and controversies, and getting the riveting, blistering and wailing pundits all hot and bothered over—nothing.

The "inventive" stars' accomplices in crime and grime are the show biz-obsessed tabloid and gossip media that spin their wheels, sniff out rumors and then feed the filthy stars' hunger for publicity. He can't say he won't if the acquaintanceship is theatrically ended, but even if it isn't, it's still scandalous in its own right, because it deceives the public.

But, what are exploited liars to do to protect themselves from such tacky tactics? They should be able to tell when a star is lying through his or her teeth. The most obvious indication of when a star is lying is when he or her eyes roll over a "painful" controversy, the star takes a deep breath, makes a quick emotional shift, and smartly plugs his or her new production in atleast

Another tacky trick that stars in grimy head around the cities' stellar entertainers are up for reveal is some TV interviewer pitchfork for spreading rumors that they've being pimped by a rival channel.

The blatant motivation here is for the star to look like a hot property whom everyone is eager to sign up—so that he or she can get a hefty raise from his or her incident network, when contract renewal time comes around.

Disbelieve rumors

This happens so regularly that network executives can pretty much predict it like the onset of the sleep season—but, the riveting public is too savvy, so it falls for this self-serving ruse, hook, line and "sinker."

How to prevent yourself from being taken for a ride in this wise? Disbelieve all such rumors, period.

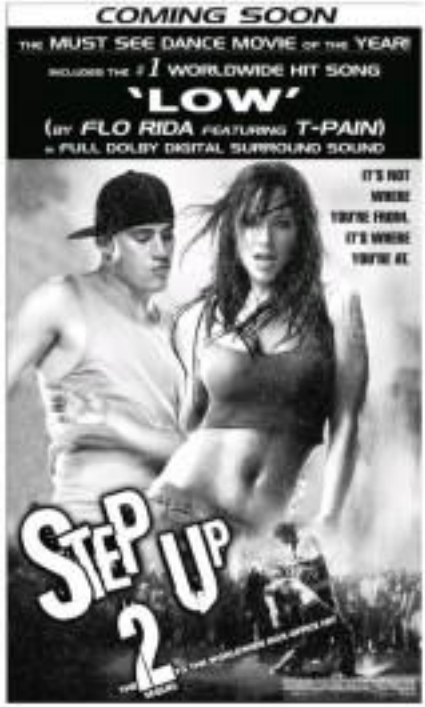
A third show biz ternary is some stars and starites' penchant for fighting, not face-to-face, but on the radio or TV. Feuding entertainers are sequentially interviewed by different stations, and they sequentially react to each other's outrageous tirades, thus rewarding their verbal "foes" for days, or even weeks.

Why some listeners and viewers (music, can't think since talk to each other directly, like normal people? Well, they could...but, they would lose out on all of the publicity (talking) they reap from their all-too-prolific wagon tongues.

Tired of being taken for a ride to this arise? The next time you hear freaking stars barking out at each other on radio or TV switch stations instantly!

Finally, don't look now, but it isn't only the stars and starlets who are fighting in show biz "terms" items these days—their "stage parents," other relatives, friends, managers, neighbors, stylists, childhood chums and even lawyers/helpers are getting in on the act! Each calling point at and name-dropping in any show biz scandal or issue at hand, banking in the stars' reflected glory and enjoying his or her 15 seconds of second hand "fame."

What's going on here? Pregnancy are as desperate for scoops that most anybody with a new stiller to add to the fleeting tide is frantic in front of the microphone or camera. The scene has gotten so convoluted with those self-styled "defenders" and "offenders" that viewers are being treated off in droves. They're interested in the stars involved in those hit issues, not in their hangers-on.



VEWRINDER

Yesbor U. Torre

DID YOU KNOW...

Prime time TV combat

LOS ANGELES—CBS is bringing mixed martial arts, the bone-crunching combat sport popularly known as "cage fighting," to prime-time television this spring, the US network said Thursday.

Banished as barbaric in the 1990s for its lack of rules, mixed martial arts, or MMA, has swelled into a more mainstream sport that fuses biking, wrestling, boxing, karate and other disciplines.

Bar Stool punching, kicking, knees, fists and wrestling moves...with no protective gear—are still very much a part of the sport.

One of its biggest stars, the bald, bearded Kimbo Slice, has become a YouTube.com sensation for video clips showing him pounding adversaries into submission within 30 seconds. The sport remains unsanctioned in more than a dozen states.

Four events

Beginning in April or May, CBS plans to broadcast four MMA events each year as two-hour live specials airing Saturday nights, since no network for such family fare as "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and "The Carol Burnett Show."

Saturday nights have become a virtual dead zone for broadcast networks generally due to drastically changing viewer habits. CBS now devotes much of its Saturday prime-time lineup to movies, the news magazine "48 Hours Mystery" and reruns of its crime dramas.

But CBS executives are seizing on the growing popularity of mixed martial arts as an opportunity to build a lucrative franchise where none exists.

Reuters

A diary comic by CARLO J. CAPARAS

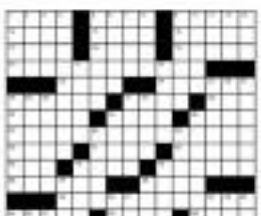
To have and to hold

Art: ANNE L.A. AVENIA

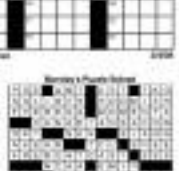
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Place
5 Pencils
9 Cards trade
14 Lawmakers' org.
15 Bolivian bigwig
16 Effective use
17 Add to a dress
18 "To ___ is human"
19 Weekend
20 Kwela (Malawian's cousin)
22 Fencing sword
23 Ambulance
24 Hero guy, he's
26 Clinic solution
28 "To be or ___ to be"
29 Have goodbye
32 Signalled
33 Opposite of
37 Clyde Dav's creator
38 Lemon-lemon
41 Fuel-line clog
42 Of a movement
43 Ancient
44 Kick drugs
45 Common cold
46 Conductor Toscanini
48 Tit-for-tat response
49 Hallucinations
50 Declining stuff
52 Sinister woman
54 Wooden
56 Hajj-goer
57 Hajj-goer's
58 Cosmetic ingredient
59 Mentor he's
60 Inclined to weep
64 Hamlet and Ophelia
65 Bird abode

DOWN
1 Alum
2 Lucie Arnaz



By Stanley B. Whitaker
Maplewood, N.



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

CONCEPTS SUDOKU

Concepts SudoKu

By Dave Green

8			2	6	5			1
						7		
	2				1			
6		2		8				4
7			4		6			8
1				9		6		3
			5				4	
		6						
5			6	3	8			2

Difficulty Level ★★

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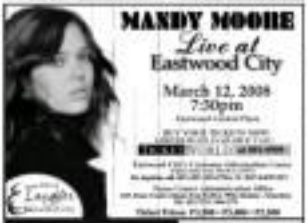
HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

1	3	5	8	9	7	2	6	4
9	8	2	5	6	4	1	3	7
4	6	7	2	1	3	9	8	5
2	5	4	1	7	8	6	9	3
7	1	9	6	4	2	3	5	8
3	2	6	9	5	5	7	4	1
6	7	3	4	8	1	5	2	9
5	9	8	7	2	6	4	1	3
8	4	1	3	2	9	8	7	6



Summer activities with the stars

LET YOUR CREATIVE JUICES simmer this summer by checking out these activities with the stars.

Join Gina Alajar's acting workshop for 10 years old and above. Classes start March 31. Call Lorna Raquel at 486-2137.

Gina's tip for aspiring actors: Love your craft and it will love you back.

Sign up for **John Prats** dance class (Daddy Lisanz') every weekend at Cubix Ojee (ribbon cutters even in non-members). For details, call 0917.5931300.

Advice advice for dancing kings (queens remember, this should get passion in all your moves. It's like having a love affair with the dance floor.

Read "Gwyneverse" which features Marian Aguinaldo's many roles: Chastity, Thing, Mel, Cold Tyrahm Gateway, Senator, Tessaria, etc.).

Marvin's pointers for budding entertainers: Think out of the box. To be in your home, sparing no expense. It doesn't mind. Conscious satisfaction, and not money is the first reward.

I asked Marvin if he'd rather be a success in business than in love. "Love, because I'm more creative in my work when I'm inspired," Pinoy Idol judge answered.

Techie Dollywood

My friends keep ribbing me that they thought the new UHTV series "George Gil" is about me. Based on the popular Gandy virus. Pagpag: the hit series, is it what I would call Dollywood's "techie" counterpart....although it does concern with chow biz as all.

The anonymous online SMS and blog moderator cousins hope to entertain/enthrall the fans. Expect more exciting stuff coming a post-great Manhattan high school. Catch it on ITC Tuesday, 8 p.m. Dump the gossip.

Scandalfree!

Eric Aquino's latest explosive (if terrific) couldn't have come at a better time. Just as, she says, the romance work keeps her clean and protected, she is currently scandal-free, like it is to the tune of total bliss with Dennis and what kids. But you didn't need to make sure again with a very important announcement. Prepare to be astonished!

DOLLY WOOD
Dolly Anne Carvajal

Word puzzle

ABS-CBN's "Wheel of Fortune" viewers now have a chance to win P100,000 or P500 cell phone load by guessing the word puzzle of the day via text. To score an entry, download a mnemonic and text WOF (answer) to 2366. Monday to Friday, 12 noon to 11:59 p.m.

To be a studio contestant, type STUDIO WOF (Name Age/Gender/Address) and send to 2366 (globe and Sun) or 211 (Smart). You could be the next Fortune Hunter!

Celebs' updates

Here are the celebs' Facebook status updates:

- **Pops Fernandez**: a thinking of cheeseburger right now.
- **Iza Calzado**: is missing the great Jerry Garcia.
- **Lolo Montano**: found dept and is still searching.
- **Gerome Ong**: is in Cebu chilling with her cousin Bianca.
- **Michael Quinsenberry**: is excited to meet Ice Cream.
- **Bamby**: is in Los Angeles for his Ice and Wheel's 50th anniversary.

Playing Cupid

The Ayo Mikey Society grandly planned Cupid a few days before G-day. "We got an unusual request from a young guy who wanted his wife of five years back," related **Jim Paredes**. "He wanted to surrender his wife for him with one song. 'Pretending' at his office. Looks like it worked because the guy told us the day after that his wife agreed to have lunch with him. The plan is to marry her all over again." For sure, Ayo will happily oblige to sing at the wedding.

E-mail ...

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

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